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THE RIVALS

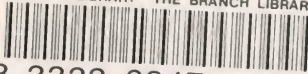
By

RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN

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THE RIVALS :
A COMEDY IN FIVE ACTS
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THE RIVALS



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THE RIVALS

A COMEDY IN FIVE ACTS

By
RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN



BOSTON
WALTER H. BAKER COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

THE RIVALS

CHARACTERS

Original Cast,
Covent Gar- John St. Theatre, Boston Museum,
den, London, New York, (first time)
Jan. 17, 1775 March 14, 1792 Feb. 18, 1846

SIR ANTHONY ABSOLUTE,	Mr. Shuter.	Mr. Heard.	G. C. Germon.
CAPT. JACK ABSOLUTE	Mr. Wood- ward.	Mr. Arthur Hallam.	Louis Mestayer.
FAULKLAND	Mr. Lewis.	Mr. Martin.	Jacob W. Thoman.
BOB ACRES	Mr. Quick.	Mr. Harper.	W. H. Smith.
SIR LUCIUS O'TRIGGER	Mr. Lee.	Mr. Robinson.	Mr. Rogers.
FAG	Mr. Lee Lewes.		Frank Whitman.
DAVID	Mr. Dunstal.	Mr. Ryan.	C. H. Saunders.
BOY			
THOMAS	Mr. Fearon.		
MRS. MALAPROP	Mrs. Green.	Mrs. Rankin.	Mrs. J. Reid.
LYDIA LANGUISH	Miss Bar- santi.	Miss Tuke.	Mrs. Geo. Barrett.
JULIA	Mrs. Buck- ley.	Mrs. Hamilton.	Miss S. Kirby.
LUCY	Mrs. Lessing- ham.	Miss Gray.	Miss Stuart.
MAID			

Howard Athenæum,
Oct. 5, 1846

Great All-Star Cast
of May, 1896

SIR ANTHONY ABSOLUTE	W. H. Chippendale.	W. H. Crane.
CAPT. JACK ABSOLUTE	J. H. Hall.	Robert Taber.
FAULKLAND	W. L. Ayling.	Joseph Holland.
BOB ACRES	W. H. Crisp.	Joseph Jefferson.
SIR LUCIUS O'TRIGGER	William Warren.	Nath. C. Goodwin.
FAG	J. J. Bradshaw.	E. M. Holland.
DAVID	C. H. Saunders.	Francis Wilson.
BOY		
THOMAS		
MRS. MALAPROP	Mrs. Martha Maywood.	Mrs. John Drew.
LYDIA LANGUISH	Mary Taylor.	Julia Marlowe Taber.
JULIA	Miss Maywood.	
LUCY	Miss Hildreth.	Fanny Rice.
MAID	Miss Stone.	

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INTRODUCTION.

ANY lover of the play who has studied from a printed book the text of a piece familiar to him on the stage must have discovered that there was a wide difference between the published and acted drama. This difference is due to the additions and cuts and developed business which have altered the piece in its progress to success in the hands of players. It is possible for any student to secure the original text of such plays as have become literature. There appeared, however, every chance that, unless some special effort was made to preserve in an acting edition of plays that have become almost classics, such innovations and alterations and eliminations as have become a part of the acted plays because they added to their effectiveness, they would be lost.

In the days when these plays were acted in all theatres, there was no chance that these traditions could disappear. But in the present condition of the play-house, when few actors have a *répertoire*, when the players identified with the old comedies are dying out, it seemed imperative that an effort should be made to preserve, for the present and future, stage editions of these plays, in which business and cuts, additions and mechanical suggestions, should be carefully incorporated. The texts of this edition, which represents the first effort made to provide players with such books, are edited either from the prompt books of one of the best-known theatres in America, or from the books used by special actors, whose reputation and success give them authority, and are offered with confidence, as entirely reliable, both as to lines and business.

It seemed appropriate that, in adding this edition of books to stage literature, the opportunity should be seized to identify it with the name of the actor who for forty years was most closely associated in the experience of Bostonians with "the old comedies," — William Warren, unrivalled actor, sterling gentleman, an ornament to the profession he honored, an example to his

fellow-players, — who, because almost his entire career was associated with Boston, risked in familiarity some honor, and passed the sooner from limited favor to partial oblivion.

It was in the play that opens this series — “The Rivals” — that William Warren made his *début* in Boston, though it was neither on the stage that knew him best, nor in the part with which we associate him. On July 4, 1846, he first appeared in Boston at the Howard Athenæum, then the smart theatre, as Sir Lucius O’Trigger, having, at the request of Henry Crisp — father of the Harry Crisp remembered best here, and of Speaker Crisp — changed parts with him, relinquishing Bob Acres for the Irish gentleman, O’Trigger. In the season of 1848 William Warren first played Bob Acres, and at the Museum, where for a whole generation he was a favorite.

“The Rivals” has had a very interesting history. Written by Richard Brinsley Sheridan (son of Garrick’s friend, Tom Sheridan) it was produced at Covent Garden, London, Jan. 17, 1775, when its author was in his twenty-fourth year. Written rapidly, with all the exuberance of spirit of such an age, it originally contained material enough for two plays, and even when manager Harris had cut it ruthlessly it was still too long. At its first production it was a failure, owing to the bad acting of Mr. Lee as Sir Lucius, but its second hearing, with Dr. Tom Sheridan’s friend Mr. Clinch as the Irish gentleman, reversed the decision; and ever since “The Rivals” has held a high rank among the old comedies.

“The Rivals” was first performed in America at the John Street Theatre, New York, June 9, 1786, for the benefit of Mrs. Harper. The Harpers were the first regular actors to come to Boston. On Aug. 10, 1792, they opened the Board Alley Theatre, just off what is now Hawley Street, and there, Nov. 14, 1792, they produced “The Rivals.” Since that time the comedy has been constantly given in Boston. It was first given at the Museum, Feb. 18, 1846. Since its first production audiences have undergone a radical change of spirits and taste, and this play has altered accordingly. Originally the sentimental scenes of Faulkland and his Julia moved audiences to tears, while the comedy of Bob Acres, and the intrigues of Lydia and Jack were barely tolerated. To the taste of to-day the Faulkland episode is tedious enough, and has been curtailed accordingly, while in the Jefferson version Julia disappears utterly.

Since 1880 Joseph Jefferson has made many productions of this play, more notable for strong names in the casts than for strong acting. These productions culminated in May, 1896, in what was known as the "great all-star cast," a combination of stars that toured the country one month, travelling in palatial palace cars, on board of which they lived, and appearing as a rule but once in each big city. The venture was more remarkable for its financial success than artistic achievement. The receipts averaged six thousand dollars a performance, which the uninitiated may be interested to know exceeds what is considered a great week's business by successful shows.

In preparing a good acting version, it has been considered wise to preserve the play in just the shape in which it was known before Joseph Jefferson reduced it to three acts, and called forth from William Warren the *mot* that it was an interesting performance "with Sheridan twenty miles away."

In the Jefferson version the first curtain falls on the exit of Sir Anthony in rage with his son. The second descends on Bob Acres's direction to Captain Absolute to tell Sir Lucius, "I kill a man a week." The final curtain is brought down on the rhymed tag introduced here, and which is the only thing in this edition borrowed from the Jefferson version.

Such an edition of plays as is thus inaugurated is as interesting to students as to actors, for it contains the very best evidence of what actors do for the success of plays, while to embryo play-makers it is a practical lesson.

M. A.

BOSTON, June, 1896.

PROPERTIES.

- ACT I. SCENE I. — Coachman's whip for Thomas. Riding-whip for Fag.
 SCENE II. — Four books for Lucy. Written paper or notebook for Lucy.
- ACT II. SCENE II. — Letter for Lucy to give to Sir Lucius.
- ACT III. SCENE III. — Letter for Mrs. Malaprop.
 SCENE IV. — Writing materials on table, sealing-wax, etc.
- ACT IV. SCENE I. — Miniatures for Lydia and Captain Absolute.
- ACT V. SCENE II. — Pair of duelling pistols for Acres. Stable-broom for David. Package letters for Sir Lucius.

COSTUMES.

THE original costumes were of course of the period of 1775, — the cocked hat, knee breeches, and hooped skirt epoch. This dress has been ~~curiously~~ altered since the original production. At the first performance Acres was the only one who made a decided change of costume in the play, a substitution of riding-boots for buckled shoes, or the addition of a mantilla and hat constituting the other principal changes. But in these days of fine toilets in the theatre, when an actress's dress plays such an important part in theatrical productions, it is not unusual to see Lydia and Mrs. Malaprop make three changes of toilet.

For the assistance of players it may not be uninteresting to preserve the original costumes, although actors in these days usually study up their dress for a part from contemporary plates, and stage-managers and play-producers decide on combinations of colors. As but five hours are supposed to elapse between the meeting of Fag and Thomas on the street, and the interrupted duel at King's Mead Field, the original method of no change, save the donning of an outside garment, is rational.

SIR ANTHONY ABSOLUTE. — Light brown cloth suit, lined with crimson silk, and gold buttons. A brown great coat, black silk plush cuffs and collar, and gold vellum button-holes; cocked hat, gold loop and cockade; white silk stockings, square-toed shoes, and buckles.

CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE. — Scarlet regimental full dress coat, white breeches, silk stockings, and cocked hat.

SIR LUCIUS O'TRIGGER. — Fashionable blue dress coat, lined with white silk, and gilt buttons; white waistcoat, black silk breeches and stockings, and cocked hat.

FAULKLAND. — Full dress black coat, white waistcoat, black breeches, and black stockings.

ACRES. — *First dress*: Brown riding frock, buff waistcoat, and white cord breeches. *Second dress*: An orange cloth coat, white waistcoat, with a scarlet satin under, buff stocking pantaloons, trimmed with light blue braid, white silk stockings, and cocked hat.

FAG. — Dark livery frock, buff waistcoat and breeches, glazed hat with cockade, silver band, and top boots.

DAVID. — Sky blue coat, red waistcoat, leather breeches, striped stockings, shoes and buckles, wig, and white neckcloth.

COACHMAN. — Blue livery.

JULIA. — *First dress*: White leno and ditto scarf, trimmed with lace. *Second dress*: White satin.

LYDIA LANGUISH. — White crape frock, festooned up at the bottom, with pink silk cord and tassels.

MRS. MALAPROP. — Crimson satin dress, trimmed with white lace and satin ribbon.

LUCY. — Light colored gown and apron, trimmed with ribbon.

THE RIVALS.

ACT I.

Scene 1. — *A street in Bath, in first grooves.*

Enter COACHMAN, L. I E., FAG *following, and calling after him. COACHMAN has coach-whip in hand, and FAG a riding-whip.*

FAG (L.). What! Thomas! Sure, 'tis he! What, Thomas! Thomas!

COACH. (R.). Hey? Odds life — Mr. Fag! Give us your hand, my old fellow-servant.

FAG. Excuse my glove, Thomas; I'm devilish glad to see you, my lad! Why, my prince of charioteers, you look as hearty — but who the deuce thought of seeing you in Bath?

COACH. Sure, master, madam Julia, Harry, Mrs. Kate, and the postillion, be all come.

FAG. Indeed!

COACH. Ay; master thought another fit of the gout was coming to make him a visit, so he'd a mind to gi't the slip — an' whip! we were all off at an hour's warning.

FAG. Ay, ay; hasty in every thing, or it would not be Sir Anthony Absolute.

COACH. But tell us, Mr. Fag, how does young master? Odds! Sir Anthony will stare to see the captain here!

FAG. I do not serve Captain Absolute now.

COACH. Why, sure!

FAG. At present, I am employed by Ensign Beverley.

COACH. I doubt, Mr. Fag, you ha'n't changed for the better.

FAG. I have not changed, Thomas.

COACH. No! Why, didn't you say you had left young master?

FAG. No. Well, honest Thomas, I must puzzle you no further. Briefly, then, Captain Absolute and Ensign Beverley are one and the same person.

COACH. The devil they are! Do tell us, Mr. Fag, the meaning on't.

FAG. Why, then, the cause of all this is love—love, Thomas, who has been a masquerader ever since the days of Jupiter.

COACH. But, pray, why does your master pass only for ensign? Now, if he had shammed general, indeed—

FAG. Ah, Thomas! there lays the mystery of the matter. Hark ye, Thomas; my master is in love with a lady of a very singular taste—a lady, who likes him better as a half-pay ensign, than if she knew he was son and heir to Sir Anthony Absolute, a baronet of three thousand a-year.

COACH. That is an odd taste, indeed! But has she got the stuff, Mr. Fag? Is she rich, eh?

FAG. Rich! why, I believe she owns half the stocks! Zounds, Thomas, she could pay the national debt as easily as I could my washerwoman! She has a lap-dog that eats out of gold, she feeds her parrot with small pearls, and all her thread-papers are made of bank-notes!

COACH. Bravo, faith! Odd! I warrant she has a set of thousands, at least! But does she draw kindly with the captain?

FAG. As loving fond as cooing pigeons.

COACH. May one hear her name?

FAG. Miss Lydia Languish; but there is an old, tough aunt in the way—though, by-the-bye, she has never seen my master, for he got acquainted with miss while on a visit to Gloucestershire.

COACH. Well, I wish they were once harnessed together in matrimony. But pray, Mr. Fag, what kind of a place is this Bath? I ha' heard a great deal of it. Here's a mort o' merry-making, eh?

FAG. Pretty well, Thomas, pretty well; 'tis a good lounge—but damn the place, I'm tired of it; their regular hours stupefy me—not a fiddle or a card after eleven! However, Mr. Faulkland's gentleman and I keep it up a little in private parties. I'll introduce you there, Thomas; you'll like him much. But, Thomas, you must polish a little—indeed, you must. Here, now, this wig; what the devil do you do with a wig, Thomas? None of the London whips, of any degree of ton, wear wigs now.

READY to change set.

COACH. More's the pity, more's the pity, I say, Mr. Fag. Odds life! when I heard how the lawyers and doctors had took to their own hair, I thought how 'twould go next. Odd rabbit it! when the fashion had got foot on the bar, I guessed 'twould mount on the box. But 'tis all out of character; believe me, Mr. Fag; and look ye, I'll never give up mine — the lawyers and doctors may do as they will.

FAG. Well, Thomas, we'll not quarrel about that. But hold, mark — mark, Thomas.

COACH. Zooks, 'tis the captain! Is that the lady with him?

FAG. No, no, that is madam Lucy, my master's mistress's maid; they lodge at that house. But I must after him, to tell him the news. *(Crosses to R.; COACHMAN to L.)*

COACH. Odd, he's giving her money! Well, Mr. Fag —

FAG. Good bye, Thomas; I have an appointment in Gyde's porch this evening, at eight; meet me there, and we'll make a little party.

Exeunt COACHMAN, L.; FAG, R. I E.

CHANGE set.

Scene II. — *A dressing-room in MRS. MALAPROP'S lodgings, second grooves; discovered, LYDIA LANGUISH sitting on a sofa, R. C. with a book in her hand; LUCY as if just returned from a message, on her R.*

LUCY. Indeed, ma'am, I traversed half the town in search of it; I don't believe there's a circulating library in Bath I ha'n't been at.

LYD. And could you not get "The Reward of Constancy"?

LUCY. No, indeed, ma'am.

LYD. Nor "The Fatal Connexion"?

LUCY. No, indeed, ma'am.

LYD. Nor "The Mistakes of the Heart"?

READY knock, L.

LUCY. Ma'am, as ill-luck would have it, Mr. Bull said, Miss Sukey Saunter had just fetched it away.

LYD. Heigho! Did you inquire for "The Delicate Distress"?

LUCY. Or, "The Memoirs of Lady Woodford"? Yes, indeed, ma'am, I asked every where for it; and I might have brought it from Mr. Frederick's, but Lady Slattern Lounger, who had just sent it home, had so soiled and dog's-eared it, it wa'n't fit for a Christian to read.

LYD. Heigho! Yes, I always know when Lady Slattern has been before me. She has a most observing thumb, and, I believe, cherishes her nails for the convenience of making marginal notes. Well, child, what have you brought me?

LUCY. Oh, here, ma'am! (*Takes books from under her cloak and from her pockets.*) This is "The Man of Feeling," and this, "Peregrine Pickle"—here are "The Tears of Sensibility," and "Humphrey Clinker."

KNOCK, L.

LYD. Hold! here's some one coming—quick, see who it is.

Exit LUCY, L. I E.

JUL. (*heard outside*). Very well, Lucy.

LYD. Surely I heard my cousin Julia's voice!

Re-enter LUCY, L. I E.

LUCY. Lud, ma'am, here is Miss Melville!

LYD. Is it possible!

Enter JULIA, L. I E.

LYD. (*rising*). My dearest Julia, how delighted I am! (*They embrace.*) How unexpected was this happiness!

Exit LUCY, L. I E.

JUL. True, Lydia, and our pleasure is the greater. But what has been the matter? You were denied to me at first.

LYD. (*reseating herself, and drawing JULIA beside her on sofa*; LYDIA, R.; JULIA, L.). Ah, Julia, I have a thousand things to tell you! But first inform me what has conjured you to Bath? Is Sir Anthony here?

JUL. He is. We are arrived within this hour, and I suppose he will be here to wait on Mrs. Malaprop as soon as he is dressed.

LYD. Then before we are interrupted, let me impart to

you some of my distress ; I know your gentle nature will sympathize with me, though your prudence may condemn me. My letters have informed you of my whole connection with Beverley, but I have lost him, my Julia — my aunt has discovered our intercourse, by a note she intercepted, and has confined me ever since. Yet would you believe it? She has fallen absolutely in love with a tall Irish baronet she met one night since we have been here, at Lady Mac-Shuffle's rout.

JUL. You jest, Lydia. *funny*

LYD. No, upon my word. She really carries on a kind of correspondence with him, under a feigned name, though, till she chooses to be known to him; but it is a Delia, or a Celia, I assure you.

JUL. Then surely she is now more indulgent to her niece?

LYD. Quite the contrary; since she has discovered her own frailty, she has become ten times more suspicious of mine. Then I must inform you of another plague; that odious Acres is to be in Bath to-day, so that, I protest, I shall be teased out of all spirits.

JUL. Come, come, Lydia, hope for the best. Sir Anthony shall use his interest with Mrs. Malaprop.

LYD. But you have not heard the worst. Unfortunately I had quarrelled with my poor Beverley, just before my aunt made the discovery, and I have not seen him since to make up.

JUL. What was his offence?

LYD. Nothing at all; but I don't know how it was, as often as we had been together, we had never had a quarrel; and, somehow, I was afraid he would never give me an opportunity; so, last Thursday I wrote a letter to myself, to inform myself that Beverley was, at that time, paying his addresses to another woman. I signed it "Your unknown friend," showed it to Beverley, charged him with his falsehood, put myself in a violent passion, and vowed I'd never see him more.

JUL. And you let him depart so, and have not seen him since?

LYD. 'Twas the next day my aunt found the matter out; I intended only to have teased him three days and a half, and now I have lost him forever.

JUL. If he is as deserving and sincere as you have represented him to me, he will never resign you so. Yet con-

sider, Lydia, you tell me he is but an ensign — and you have thirty thousand pounds!

LYD. But, you know, I lose most of my fortune if I marry without my aunt's consent till of age; and that is what I have determined to do ever since I knew the penalty; nor could I love the man who would wish to wait a day for the alternative.

JUL. Nay, this is caprice!

LYD. What, does Julia tax me with caprice? I thought her lover Faulkland had inured her to it.

JUL. I do not love even his faults. They, I own, have cost me many unhappy hours; but I have learned to think myself his debtor for those imperfections which arise from the ardour of his attachment.

LYD. Well, I cannot blame you for defending him; but, tell me candidly, Julia — had he never saved your life, do you think you should have been attached to him as you are? Believe me, the rude blast that overset your boat was a prosperous gale of love to him.

JUL. Gratitude may have strengthened my attachment to Mr. Faulkland, but I loved him before he had preserved me; yet, surely, that alone were an obligation sufficient —

LYD. Obligation! Why, a water spaniel would have done as much! Well, I should never think of giving my heart to a man because he could swim! What's here?

Enter LUCY, in a hurry, L. I E.

LUCY. Oh, ma'am, here is Sir Anthony Absolute, just come home with your aunt.

LYD. They'll not come here; Lucy, do you watch.

Exit LUCY, L. I E.

JUL. Yet I must go; Sir Anthony does not know I am here, and if we meet, he'll detain me, to show me the town. (*Rising.*) I'll take another opportunity of paying my respects to Mrs. Malaprop, when she shall treat me, as long as she chooses, with her select words, so ingeniously misapplied, without being mispronounced. (*Crosses, R.*)

Enter LUCY, L. I E.

LUCY. Oh, lud, ma'am! They are both coming up stairs!

LYD. Well, I'll not detain you. (*Rising, and crossing to*

door at R.) Adieu, my dear Julia. I'm sure you are in haste to send to Faulkland. There — (*indicating door, R.*) through my room you'll find another staircase

JUL. Adieu!

Exit, R. I E.

LYD. Here, my dear Lucy, hide these books. Quick — quick! Fling “Peregrine Pickle” under the toilet — throw “Roderick Random” into the closet — put “The Innocent Adultery” into “The Whole Duty of Man” — thrust “Lord Aimworth” under the sofa — cram “Ovid” behind the bolster — there — put “The Man of Feeling” into your pocket. Now for them!

Enter MRS. MALAPROP, *followed by* SIR ANTHONY ABSOLUTE, L. I E; LUCY *stands L. at wing, hiding books behind her, until* SIR ANTHONY *and* MRS. MALAPROP *pass, when she saunters demurely off, L. I E.*

MRS. M. (C.). There, Sir Anthony, there stands the deliberate simpleton who wants to disgrace her family and lavish herself on a fellow not worth a shilling.

LYD. (R.). Madam, I thought you once —

MRS. M. You thought, miss! I don't know any business you have to think at all. Thought does not become a young woman. But the point we would request of you is, that you will promise to forget this fellow — to illiterate him, I say, from your memory.

LYD. Ah! madam! our memories are independent of our wills. It is not so easy to forget.

MRS. M. But I say it is, miss! There is nothing on earth so easy as to forget, if a person chooses to set about it. I'm sure I have as much forgot your poor dear uncle as if he had never existed, and I thought it my duty so to do; and let me tell you, Lydia, these violent memories don't become a young woman.

SIR A. (L.). Surely the young lady does not pretend to remember what she is ordered to forget! Ah, this comes of her reading.

LYD. What crime, madam, have I committed, to be treated thus?

MRS. M. Now don't attempt to extirpate yourself from the matter; you know I have proof controvertible of it.

But tell me, will you promise me to do as you are bid? Will you take a husband of your friends' choosing?

LYD. Madam, I must tell you plainly that, had I no preference for any one else, the choice you have made would be my aversion.

MRS. M. What business have you, miss, with preference and aversion? They don't become a young woman; and you ought to know that, as both always wear off, 'tis safest, in matrimony, to begin with a little aversion. I am sure I hated your poor dear uncle before marriage as if he'd been a black-a-moor, and yet, miss, you are sensible what a wife I made; and, when it pleased Heaven to release me from him, 'tis unknown what tears I shed!

SIR A. He-e-m!

MRS. M. But, suppose we were going to give you another choice, will you promise us to give up this Beverley?

LYD. Could I belie my thoughts so far as to give that promise, my actions would certainly as far belie my words.

MRS. M. Take yourself to your room! You are fit company for nothing but your own ill humours.

LYD. Willingly, ma'am; I cannot change for the worse.

Exit, R. I E.

MRS. M. There's a little intricate hussy for you!

SIR A. It is not to be wondered at, ma'am; all that is the natural consequence of teaching girls to read. In my way hither, Mrs. Malaprop, I observed your niece's maid coming forth from a circulating library; she had a book in each hand—they were half-bound volumes, with marble covers. From that moment, I guessed how full of duty I should see her mistress!

MRS. M. (R.). Those are vile places, indeed!

SIR A. Madam, a circulating library in a town is as an evergreen tree of diabolical knowledge! It blossoms through the year! And, depend on it, Mrs. Malaprop, that they who are so fond of handling the leaves, will long for the fruit at last.

MRS. M. Fie, fie, Sir Anthony, you surely speak laconically.

(SIR ANTHONY places chair for her, and another for himself, bows to her respectfully, waits till she is seated R. C., then seats himself L. C.)

SIR A. (L. C.). Why, Mrs. Malaprop, in moderation, now, what would you have a woman know?

MRS. M. (R. C.). Observe me, Sir Anthony — I would by no means wish a daughter of mine to be a progeny of learning. I don't think so much learning becomes a young woman. For instance — I would never let her meddle with Greek, or Hebrew, or Algebra, or Simony, or Fluxions, or Paradoxes, or such inflammatory branches of learning; nor will it be necessary for her to handle any of your mathematical, astronomical, diabolical instruments; but, Sir Anthony, I would send her, at nine years old, to a boarding-school, in order to learn a little ingenuity and artifice. Then, sir, she should have a supercilious knowledge in accounts; and, as she grew up, I would have her instructed in geometry, that she might know something of the contagious countries; above all, she should be a perfect mistress of orthodoxy — that is, she should not mispronounce and misspell words as our young ladies of the present day constantly do. This, Sir Anthony, is what I would have a woman know; and I don't think there is a superstitious article in it.

SIR A. Well, well, Mrs. Malaprop, I will dispute the point no further with you; though I must confess, that you are a truly moderate and polite arguer, for almost every third word you say is on my side of the question. But to the more important point in debate — you say you have no objection to my proposal?

MRS. M. None, I assure you. I am under no positive engagement with Mr. Acres; and as Lydia is so obstinate against him, perhaps your son may have better success.

SIR A. Well, madam, I will write for the boy directly. He knows not a syllable of this yet, though I have for some time had the proposal in my head. He is at present with his regiment.

MRS. M. We have never seen your son, Sir Anthony: but I hope no objection on his side.

SIR A. Objection! Let him object, if he dare! No, no, Mrs. Malaprop; Jack knows that the least demur puts me in a frenzy directly. My process was always very simple. In his younger days, 'twas "Jack, do this." If he demurred, I knocked him down; and, if he grumbled at that, I always sent him out of the room.

MRS. M. Ay, and the properest way, o' my conscience! Nothing is so conciliating to young people as severity

(*Both rise.*) Well, Sir Anthony, I shall give Mr. Acres his discharge, and prepare Lydia to receive your son's invocations; and I hope you will represent her to the captain as an object not altogether illegible. (*Crosses R.*)

SIR A. Madam, I will handle the subject prudently. I must leave you. Good morning, Mrs. Malaprop. (*Both bow profoundly, and SIR ANTHONY steps back as if to go out; then returns to say.*) And let me beg you, Mrs. Malaprop, to enforce this matter roundly to the girl — take my advice, keep a tight hand. Good-morning, Mrs. Malaprop. (*Same business repeated.*) If she rejects this proposal, clap her under lock and key. Good-morning, Mrs. Malaprop. (*Same business repeated.*) And if you were just to let the servants forget to bring her dinner for three or four days, you can't conceive how she'd come about. Good-morning, Mrs. Malaprop.

Bows formally, and exit L. I E.

MRS. M. Well, at any rate, I shall be glad to get her from under my intuition; she has somehow discovered my partiality for Sir Lucius O'Trigger. Sure, Lucy can't have betrayed me! No, the girl is such a simpleton, I should have made her confess it. (*Calls.*) Lucy! Lucy! Had she been one of your artificial ones, I should never have trusted her.

Enter LUCY, L. I E.

LUCY. Did you call, ma'am?

MRS. M. Yes, girl. Did you see Sir Lucius while you was out?

LUCY. No, indeed, ma'am, not a glimpse of him.

MRS. M. You are sure, Lucy, that you never mentioned —

LUCY. Oh, gemini! I'd sooner cut my tongue out!

MRS. M. Well, don't let your simplicity be reposed upon.

LUCY. No, ma'am.

MRS. M. So, come to me presently, and I'll give you another letter to Sir Lucius; but mind, Lucy, if ever you betray what you are intrusted with, — unless it be other people's secrets to me, — you forfeit my malevolence forever; and your being a simpleton shall be no excuse for your locality.

Exit R. I E.

WARN curtain.

LUCY. Ha! ha! ha! So, my dear simplicity, let me give you a little respite. (*Altering her manner.*) Let girls in my station be as fond as they please of being expert and knowing in their trust, commend me to a mask of silliness and a pair of sharp eyes for my own interest under it! Let me see to what account have I turned my simplicity lately. (*Looks at a paper which she takes from front of her dress.*) "For abetting Miss Lydia Languish in a design of running away with an ensign, in money sundry times, twelve pound twelve — gowns, five — hats, ruffles, caps, etc., etc., numberless. From the said ensign, within this last month, six guineas and a half. Item, from Mrs. Malaprop, for betraying the young people to her" — when I found matters were likely to be discovered — "two guineas and a French shawl. Item, from Mr. Acres, for carrying divers letters" — which I never delivered — "two guineas and a pair of buckles. Item, from Sir Lucius O'Trigger, three crowns, two gold pocket-pieces, and a silver snuff-box!" (*Returns paper to front of her dress.*) Well done, simplicity! Yet I was forced to make my Hibernian believe that he was corresponding, not with the aunt, but with the niece; for, though not over rich, I found he had too much pride and delicacy to sacrifice the feelings of a gentleman to the necessities of his fortune.

RING curtain.

Exit R. I E.

QUICK CURTAIN.

—

ACT II.

Scene I. — CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE'S lodgings, in third grooves.
*Table C. up stage, chairs R. and L. Pictures on the walls.
 Doors R. and L., first and second entrances.*

Enter CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE and FAG, L. 2 E.

FAG (*coming down L.*). Sir, while I was there, Sir Anthony came in; I told him you had sent me to inquire after his health, and to know if he was at leisure to see you.

CAPT. A. (C.). And what did he say, on hearing I was at Bath?

FAG. Sir, in my life I never saw an elderly gentleman more astonished.

CAPT. A. Well, sir, and what did you say?

FAG. Oh, I lied, sir — I forget the precise lie, but you may depend on't, he got no truth from me. Yet, with submission, for fear of blunders in future, I should be glad to fix what has brought us to Bath, in order that we may lie a little consistently. Sir Anthony's servants were curious, sir, very curious indeed.

CAPT. A. You have said nothing to them?

FAG. Oh, not a word, sir — not a word. Mr. Thomas, indeed, the coachman, whom I take to be the discreetest of whips —

CAPT. A. 'Sdeath! — you rascal! You have not trusted him?

FAG. Oh, no, sir, — no — no — not a syllable, upon my veracity! He was, indeed, a little inquisitive; but I was sly, sir — devilish sly! "My master," said I, "honest Thomas," — you know, sir, one says honest to one's inferiors, — "is come to Bath to recruit" — yes, sir — I said to recruit — and whether for men, money, or constitution, you know, sir, is nothing to him, nor any one else.

CAPT. A. Well — recruit will do — let it be so.

FAG. Oh, sir, recruit will do surprisingly; indeed, to give the thing an air, I told Thomas that your honour had already enlisted five disbanded chairmen, seven minority waiters, and thirteen billiard markers.

CAPT. A. You blockhead, never say more than is necessary.

FAG. I beg pardon, sir — I beg pardon. But, with submission, a lie is nothing unless well supported. Sir, whenever I draw on my invention for a good current lie, I always forge the endorsements as well as the bill.

CAPT. A. Well, take care you don't hurt your credit by offering too much security. Is Mr. Faulkland returned?

FAG. He is above, sir, changing his dress.

CAPT. A. Can you tell whether he has been informed of Sir Anthony's and Miss Melville's arrival?

FAG. I fancy not, sir; he has seen no one since he came in but his gentleman, who was with him at Bristol. I think, sir, I hear Mr. Faulkland coming down.

CAPT. A. Go, tell him I am here. *(Crosses L.)*

FAG. Yes, sir. *(Crosses to R.; turns back at door.)* I beg pardon, sir, but should Sir Anthony call, you will do me the favor to remember that we are recruiting, if you please.

CAPT. A. Well, well.

FAG. And in tenderness to my character, if your honor could bring in the chairmen and waiters, I shall esteem it as an obligation; for though I never scruple a lie to serve my master, yet it hurts one's conscience to be found out.

Exit R. 2 E.

CAPT. A. Now for my whimsical friend. If he does not know that his mistress is here, I'll tease him a little before I tell him —

Enter FAG, R. 2 E.

FAG. Mr. Faulkland, sir.

Exit FAG, L. 2 E., *crossing behind.*

Enter MR. FAULKLAND, R. 2 E.

CAPT. A. *(advancing to c. to meet him).* Faulkland, you're welcome to Bath again; you are punctual in your return.

FAUL. (R. C.). Yes; I had nothing to detain me when I had finished the business I went on. Well, what news since I left you? How stand matters between you and Lydia?

CAPT. A. 'Faith, much as they were.

FAUL. Nay, then, you trifle too long. If you are sure of her, propose to the aunt in your own character, and write to Sir Anthony for his consent.

CAPT. A. Softly, softly; for though I am convinced my little Lydia would elope with me as Ensign Beverley, yet am I by no means certain that she would take me with the impediment of our friends' consent, a regular humdrum wedding, and the reversion of a good fortune on my side. Well, but, Faulkland, you'll dine with us to-day at the hotel?

FAUL. Indeed, I cannot; I am not in spirits to be of such a party. *(Putting his hat on table c.)*

CAPT. A. By heavens! I shall forswear your company. You are the most teasing, captious, incorrigible lover! Do love like a man.

FAUL. Ah! Jack, your heart and soul are not like mine,

fixed immutably on one only object. You throw for a large stake, but, losing, you could stake and throw again; but I have set my sum of happiness on this cast, and not to succeed were to be stripped of all.

CAPT. A. (*sits L.*). But for heaven's sake! what grounds for apprehension can your whimsical brain conjure up at present?

FAUL. (*sits R.*). What grounds for apprehension, did you say? Heavens! are there not a thousand? I fear for her spirits — her health — her life. Oh! Jack, when delicate and feeling souls are separated, there is not a feature in the sky, not a movement of the elements, not an aspiration of the breeze, but hints some cause for a lover's apprehension!

CAPT. A. Ay, but we may choose whether we will take the hint or not. So, then, Faulkland, if you were convinced that Julia were well, and in spirits, you would be entirely content?

FAUL. I should be happy beyond measure — I am anxious only for that.

CAPT. A. Then cure your anxiety at once — Miss Melville is in perfect health, and is at this moment in Bath.

FAUL. Nay, Jack — don't trifle with me.

CAPT. A. She is arrived here with my father, within this hour.

FAUL. Can you be serious?

CAPT. A. I thought you knew Sir Anthony better than to be surprised at a sudden whim of this kind. Seriously, then, it is as I tell you, upon my honor.

FAUL. My dear Jack — now nothing on earth can give me a moment's uneasiness.

Enter FAG, L. 2 E.

FAG. Sir, Mr. Acres, just arrived, is below.

FAUL. (*rising, starts to go*). Then I'll leave you.

CAPT. A. (*rising quickly*). Stay, Faulkland, this Acres lives within a mile of Sir Anthony, and he shall tell you how your mistress has been ever since you left her. Fag, show the gentleman up.

Exit FAG, L. 2 E.

FAUL. (R.). What, is he much acquainted in the family?

CAPT. A. (L.). Oh, very intimate; he is likewise a rival

of mine — that is, of my other self, for he does not think his friend, Captain Absolute, ever saw the lady in question, and it is ridiculous enough to hear him complain to me of one Beverley, a conceited, skulking rival, who — (Up c.)

FAUL. Hush! He's here!

Enter ACRES, L. 2 E.

ACRES (L.). Hah! my dear friend, noble captain, and honest Jack, how dost thou? Just arrived, 'faith, as you see. Sir, your humble servant. Warm work on the roads, Jack — odds whips and wheels! I've travelled like a comet, with a tail of dust all the way, as long as the Mall.

CAPT. A. (C.). Ah! Bob, you are indeed an eccentric planet, but we know your attraction hither; give me leave to introduce Mr. Faulkland to you; Mr. Faulkland, Mr. Acres.

ACRES. Sir, I am most heartily glad to see you. (*Crosses c.*) Sir, I solicit your connexions. Hey, Jack — what, this is Mr. Faulkland, who —

CAPT. A. (L.). Ay, Bob, Miss Melville's Mr. Faulkland.

ACRES. Ah! Mr. Faulkland, you are, indeed, a happy man!

FAUL. (R.). I have not seen Miss Melville yet, sir; I hope she enjoyed full health and spirits in Devonshire?

ACRES. Never knew her better in my life, sir; never better. Odds blushes and blooms! she has been as healthy as the German Spa.

FAUL. Indeed! I did hear that she had been a little indisposed.

ACRES. False, false, sir; only said to vex you; quite the reverse, I assure you.

(*Retires up the stage, looking at pictures on the wall.*)

FAUL. There, Jack, you see she has the advantage of me; I had almost fretted myself ill.

CAPT. A. Now are you angry with your mistress for not having been sick?

FAUL. (*pacing restlessly to and fro from R. to C.*). No, no, you misunderstand me; yet surely a little trifling indisposition is not an unnatural consequence of absence from those we love. Now confess — isn't there something unkind in this violent, robust, unfeeling health?

CAPT. A. (C.). Oh, it was very unkind of her to be well in your absence, to be sure!

ACRES. Good apartments, Jack. (*Coming forward L.*)

FAUL. (R.). Well, sir, but you were saying that Miss Melville has been so exceeding well — what, then, she has been merry and gay, I suppose — always in spirits, hey?

ACRES. Merry! Odds crickets! She has been the belle and spirit of the company wherever she has been — so lively and entertaining; so full of wit and humour!

(*Crosses to C. as CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE, laughing, comes down L. Imitates fanning himself with his right hand, then coquettishly holds it up close to his face, edgewise to audience, peeps on each side, and leers over top, etc.; then retires up stage.*)

FAUL. By my soul! there is an innate levity in woman that nothing can overcome! What! happy, and I away?

CAPT. A. (L.). Just now you were only apprehensive for your mistress's spirits. (*Crosses to C.*)

FAUL. Why, Jack, have I been the joy and spirit of the company?

CAPT. A. No, indeed, you have not.

FAUL. Have I been lively and entertaining?

CAPT. A. Oh, upon my word, I acquit you.

FAUL. Have I been full of wit and humor?

CAPT. A. No, 'faith, to do you justice, you have been confoundedly stupid, indeed.

ACRES (*coming down L.*). What's the matter with the gentleman?

CAPT. A. He is only expressing his great satisfaction at hearing that Julia has been so well and happy — that's all — hey, Faulkland?

FAUL. Yes, yes, she has a happy disposition!

ACRES (*crosses C.*). That she has, indeed — then she is so accomplished — so sweet a voice — so expert at her harpsichord — such a mistress of flat and sharp, squallante, rumblante, and quiverante! There was this time month — odds minims and crotchets, how she did chirrup at Mrs. Piano's concert!

FAUL. There! There!

CAPT. A. (L.). Well, well, Faulkland, I'll be sworn it was some melancholy ballad about, —

“Blow gently gales, and waft me my lover,
When absent from my heart's delight.”

ACRES. Oh, no, don't you believe it. 'Twas nothing about "Waft me my lover." It was (*sings in mock sentimental style*), —

" My heart's my own,
My will is free,
And so shall be my bo-o-o-som."

That's very like her. (*Goes up stage.*)

FAUL. Fool! fool that I am! To fix all my happiness on such a trifle! 'Sdeath! To make herself the pipe and ballad-monger of a circle! To soothe her light heart with catches and glees! What can you say to this, sir?

CAPT. A. Why, that I should be glad to hear my mistress had been so merry, sir.

FAUL. Nay, nay, nay — I'm not sorry that she has been happy — no, no, I am glad of that — but she has been dancing, too, I doubt not.

ACRES (*coming down the c.*). What does the gentleman say about dancing?

CAPT. A. He says the lady we speak of dances as well as she sings.

ACRES. Ay, truly does she — there was at our last race ball —

FAUL. (R. C.). Hell and the devil!

(*Stamps on ACRES' foot. ACRES limps to L., and without taking his eyes from FAULKLAND sidles up L., and gets behind table at c., where he slaps his whip down loudly on it in cowardly bravado.*)

There! there — I told you so! I told you so! Oh! she thrives in my absence! Dancing!

CAPT. A. For heaven's sake, Faulkland, don't expose yourself so! Suppose she has danced, what then? Does not the ceremony of society often oblige —

FAUL. Well, well, I'll contain myself — perhaps, as you say — for form's sake. I say (*to ACRES*), Mr. — Mr. — Furlong — Miles — (*To CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE.*) What's his damned name?

CAPT. A. His damned name is Acres.

FAUL. Oh, ay, Mr. Acres, you were praising Miss Melville's manner of dancing a minuet — hey?

ACRES (*coming down c.*). Oh, I dare insure her for that — but what I was going to speak of was her country dancing.

Odds swimings! She has such an air with her!

(Hums a country dance, and then dances. He crosses once with CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE and FAULKLAND, then gets back up stage, runs forward, putting his feet down very heavily, passes round outside of CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE, turns a pirouette, passing his leg over the chair, which will leave him with his back close to the table; he sits on table, and, perceiving his oddity, looks a bit abashed, and adds sheepishly.)

That is very like her, too.

FAUL. Now, disappointment on her! Defend this, Absolute! Why don't you defend this? Country dances! Jigs and reels! Am I to blame now? A minuet I could have forgiven — I should not have minded that — I say, I should not have regarded a minuet — but country dances! Zounds! had she made one in a cotillion, I believe I could have forgiven even that — but to be monkey-led for a night — to run the gauntlet through a string of amorous palming puppies — to show paces like a managed filly! Oh, Jack, there never can be but one man in the world whom a truly modest and delicate woman ought to pair with in a country dance; and, even then, the rest of the couples should be her great uncles and aunts!

CAPT. A. Ay, to be sure! Grandfathers and grandmothers!

FAUL. If there be but one vicious mind in the set, it will spread like a contagion — the action of their pulse beats to the lascivious movements of the jig — their quivering, warm-breathed sighs impregnate the air — the atmosphere becomes electrical to love, and each amorous spark darts through every link of the chain! I must leave you — I own I am somewhat flurried, and that confounded booby has perceived it. *(Crosses to L., then up stage, getting his hat from table.)*

CAPT. A. Nay, but stay, Faulkland, and thank Mr. Acres for his good news. *(ACRES drops down R. C.)*

FAUL. Damn his news!

Exit L. 2 E., but returns immediately, and bows respectfully and apologetically to ACRES, and **exit** again L. 2 E. ACRES in returning the bow is very stiff, awkward, and elaborate.

CAPT. A. Ha! ha! ha! Poor Faulkland! (*Crosses to R. and sits.*) Five minutes since "nothing on earth could give him a moment's uneasiness!"

ACRES. The gentleman wasn't angry at my praising his mistress, was he?

CAPT. A. A little jealous, I believe, Bob!

ACRES (*sits L.*). You don't say so? Ha! ha! Jealous of me! That's a good joke!

CAPT. A. There's nothing strange in that, Bob, let me tell you; that sprightly grace and insinuating manner of yours will do some mischief among the girls here.

ACRES. Ah! you joke — ha! ha! Mischief — ha! ha! But you know I am not my own property! My dear Lydia has forestalled me. She could never abide me in the country, because I used to dress so badly — but, odds frogs and tambours! I sha'n't take matters so here. Now ancient madam has no voice in it, I'll make my old clothes know who's master. I shall straightway cashier the hunting-frock, and render my leather breeches incapable. My hair has been in training some time.

CAPT. A. Indeed!

ACRES. Ay — and tho' if the side curls are a little restive, my hind part takes it very kindly.

(*Taking off his hat, shows his hair done up in curl-papers.*)

CAPT. A. Oh, you'll polish, I doubt not.

ACRES. Absolutely, I propose so; then, if I can find out this Ensign Beverley, odds triggers and flints! I'll make him know the difference o't.

CAPT. A. Spoke like a man; but, pray, Bob, I observe you have got an odd kind of a new method of swearing.

ACRES. Ha! ha! You've taken notice of it — 'tis genteel, isn't it? I didn't invent it myself, though; but a commander in our militia, a great scholar, I assure you, says that there is no meaning in the common oaths, and that nothing but their antiquity makes them respectable; because, he says, the ancients would never stick to an oath or two, but would say by Jove! or by Bacchus! or by Mars! or by Venus! or by Pallas! according to the sentiment; so that to swear with propriety, says my little Major, the "oath should be an echo to the sense;" and this we call the oath-referential, or sentimental swearing. Ha! ha! ha! 'Tis genteel, isn't it?

CAPT. A. Very genteel, and very new indeed — and I dare say will supplant all other figures of imprecation.

ACRES. Ay, ay, the best terms will grow obsolete. Damns have had their day.

Enter FAG, L. 2 E.

FAG. Sir, there is a gentleman below desires to see you. Shall I show him into the parlour?

CAPT. A. Ay — you may. (*Rises and crosses to R.*)

ACRES (*rising*). Well, I must be gone.

CAPT. A. Stay; who is it, Fag?

FAG. Your father, sir.

CAPT. A. You puppy, why didn't you show him up directly?

Exit FAG, L. 2 E.

ACRES. The idea of calling your father a gentleman — ha! ha! Your father a gentleman — ha! ha! ha! (*Crosses down L.*) You have business with Sir Anthony. I expect a message from Mrs. Malaprop, at my lodgings. I have sent also to my dear friend, Sir Lucius O'Trigger. Adieu, Jack (*up stage*), we must meet at night, when you shall give me a dozen bumpers to little Lydia. Hip, hip, hip, hurrah!

(*Cry repeated three times, the CAPTAIN joining.*)

CAPT. A. That I will, with all my heart.

Exit ACRES, L. 2 E.

Now for a parental lecture. I hope he has heard nothing of the business that has brought me here. I wish the gout had held him fast in Devonshire, with all my soul!

Enter SIR ANTHONY, L. 2 E.; CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE *advances to C. to meet him.*

Sir, I am delighted to see you here, and looking so well! Your sudden arrival at Bath made me apprehensive for your health.

(*Takes SIR ANTHONY'S hat and cane from him, and places them on table, C.*)

SIR A. (L. C.). Very apprehensive, I dare say, Jack. What, you are recruiting here, hey?

CAPT. A. (R. C.). Yes, sir, I am on duty.

SIR A. Well, Jack, I am glad to see you, though I did not expect it; for I was going to write to you on a little matter of business. (CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE *brings chairs down*)

centre.) Jack, I have been considering that I grow old and infirm, and shall probably not trouble you long. (*Sits L. C.*)

CAPT. A. (*sits R. C.*). Pardon me, sir, I never saw you look more strong and hearty, and I pray fervently that you may continue so.

SIR A. I hope your prayers may be heard, with all my heart. Well, then, Jack, I have been considering that I am so strong and hearty, I may continue to plague you a long time. Now, Jack, I am sensible that the income of your commission, and what I have hitherto allowed you, is but a small pittance for a lad of your spirit.

CAPT. A. Sir, you are very good.

SIR A. And it is my wish, while yet I live, to have my boy make some figure in the world. I have resolved, therefore, to fix you at once in a noble independence.

CAPT. A. Sir, your kindness overpowers me. Yet, sir, I presume you would not wish me to quit the army?

SIR A. Oh! that shall be as your wife chooses.

CAPT. A. My wife, sir!

SIR A. Ay, ay, settle that between you — settle that between you.

CAPT. A. A wife, sir, did you say?

SIR A. Ay, a wife. Why, did I not mention her before?

CAPT. A. Not a word of her, sir.

SIR A. Odd so! I mustn't forget her, though. Yes, Jack, the independence I was talking of is by a marriage — the fortune is saddled with a wife. But I suppose that makes no difference?

CAPT. A. Sir! sir! you amaze me!

SIR A. Why, what the devil's the matter with the fool? Just now you were all gratitude and duty.

CAPT. A. I was, sir, — you talked to me of independence and a fortune, but not a word of a wife.

SIR A. Why — what difference does that make? Odds life, sir! if you have the estate, you must take it with the live stock on it, as it stands.

CAPT. A. Pray, sir, who is the lady?

SIR A. What's that to you, sir? (*Pauses.*) Come, give me your promise to love and to marry her directly.

CAPT. A. Sure, sir, this is not very reasonable, to summon my affections for a lady I know nothing of!

SIR A. I am sure, sir, 'tis more unreasonable in you to object to a lady you know nothing of.

CAPT. A. You must excuse me, sir, if I tell you, once for all, that in this point I cannot obey you. *(Both rise.)*

SIR A. Harkye, Jack! I have heard you for some time with patience — I have been cool — quite cool; but take care — you know I am compliance itself, when I am not thwarted; no one more easily led, when I have my own way; but don't put me in a frenzy.

CAPT. A. *(putting back chairs)*. Sir, I must repeat it — in this, I cannot obey you.

SIR A. Now, damn me if ever I call you Jack again while I live! *(Crosses down R.)*

CAPT. A. *(C.)*. Nay, sir, but hear me.

SIR A. Sir, I won't hear a word — not a word! not one word! So give me your promise by a nod, and I'll tell you what, Jack — I mean you dog — if you don't, by —

CAPT. A. *(L. C.)*. What, sir, promise to link myself to some mass of ugliness?

SIR A. *(R. C., completely losing his temper, and getting angrier and angrier every moment)*. Zounds! Sirrah! The lady shall be as ugly as I choose; she shall have a hump on each shoulder; she shall be as crooked as the Crescent; her one eye shall roll like the bull's in Cox's Museum; she shall have a skin like a mummy, and the beard of a Jew, she shall be all this, sirrah; yet I'll make you ogle her all day, and sit up all night to write sonnets on her beauty.

CAPT. A. This is reason and moderation indeed!

SIR A. None of your sneering, puppy! No grinning, you jackanapes!

CAPT. A. Indeed, sir, I never was in a worse humour for mirth in my life.

SIR A. 'Tis false, sir; I know you are laughing in your sleeve; I know you'll grin when I am gone, sirrah!

CAPT. A. Sir, I hope I know my duty better.

SIR A. None of your passion, sir! None of your violence, if you please. It won't do with me, I promise you.

CAPT. A. Indeed, sir, I never was cooler in my life.

SIR A. 'Tis a confounded lie! I know you are in a passion in your heart; I know you are, you hypocritical young dog — but it won't do. *(Crosses down L.)*

CAPT. A. Nay, sir, upon my word —

SIR A. So, you will fly out! Can't you be cool, like me? What the devil good can passion do? Passion is of no service, you impudent, insolent, over-bearing reprobate! There,

you sneer again! (CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE *turns and protests in gesture.*) Don't provoke me! But you rely upon the mildness of my temper — you do, you dog! You play upon the meekness of my disposition! Yet take care — the patience of a saint may be overcome at last! But mark! I give you six hours and a half to consider of this. If you then agree, without any condition, to do everything on earth that I choose, why, confound you, I may in time forgive you; if not, zounds! don't enter the same hemisphere with me! Don't dare to breathe the same air, or use the same light with me; but get an atmosphere and a sun of your own! (*Goes up c. and gets his hat and cane from table.*) I'll strip you of your commission; I'll lodge a five-and-threepence in the hands of trustees, and you shall live on the interest. (*Puts his hat on, strikes it viciously on the top.*) I'll disown you. (*Pounds the floor with his cane.*) I'll disinherit you. (*Pounds the floor with his cane still harder.*) I'll unget you, and — and — damn me if I ever call you Jack again.

Exit L. 2 E., *pounding the floor with his cane at each step, and as soon as he is off, noise as if he were thumping the banisters with his cane as he descends the stairs.*

CAPT. A. (*up c., looking humorously at the door, and bowing elaborately.*) Mild, gentle, considerate father! I kiss your hands.

Enter FAG, L. 2 E.

FAG. Assuredly, sir, our father is wroth to a degree; he comes down-stairs eight or ten steps at a time, muttering, growling, and thumping the banisters all the way; I and the cook's dog stand bowing at the door — rap! he gives me a stroke on the head with his cane; bids me carry that to my master; then, kicking the poor turnspit into the area, damns us all for a puppy triumvirate! Upon my credit, sir, were I in your place, and found my father such very bad company, I should certainly drop his acquaintance.

CAPT. A. Cease your impertinence, sir. Did you come in for nothing more? Stand out of the way.

(*Takes FAG by the ear, and throws him round into a chair L. C.*)

Exit L. 2 E.

FAG (*rubbing his ear, and looking after CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE ruefully*). So! Sir Anthony trims my master. He is afraid to reply to his father, then vents his spleen on poor Fag! (*Rises.*) When one is vexed by one person, to revenge one's self on another, who happens to come in the way, shows the worst of temper, the basest —

Enter ERRAND BOY, L. 2 E., *blacking a boot, and trying to cut a shuffle.*

READY to change set.

BOY. Mr. Fag! Mr. Fag! Your master calls you.

FAG. Well, you little dirty puppy, you needn't bawl so — the meanest disposition, the —

BOY. Quick, quick! Mr. Fag.

FAG. Quick! quick! you impudent jackanapes! Am I to be commanded by you, too, you little impertinent, insolent kitchen-bred?

(FAG *repeats business of the CAPTAIN, seizing ERRAND BOY by the ear, and throwing him round.*)

Exit L. 2 E.

BOY (*getting up and looking stupid*). Master kicks Fag — Fag kicks me. There's a sick cat down-stairs. I'll go and kick the cat.

CHANGE set.

Scene II. — *The North Parade. First grooves.*

Enter LUCY, L. 1 E.

LUCY. So, I shall have another rival to add to my mistress's list, — Captain Absolute; however, I shall not enter his name till my purse has received due notice in form. Sir Lucius is generally more punctual when he expects to hear from his dear Dalia, as he calls her. I wonder he's not here!

SIR L. (*heard singing off L.*).

“ Oh, there was an ancient fair,
And she loved a nate young man,
And she couldn't throw shape's-eyes at him,
But only through her fan.”

Enters jauntily L. I E.

With her winks and blinks,
This wheedling Minx,

(Seeing Lucy.)

Hah! my little ambassadress. Upon my conscience, I have been looking for you; I have been on the South Parade this half hour.

LUCY (R. C. *speaking simply*). Oh, gemini! And I have been waiting for your worship here on the North.

SIR L. (L. C.). 'Faith! may be that was the reason we did not meet; and it is very comical, too, how you could go out, and I not see you — for I was only taking a nap at the Parade Coffee-House, and I chose the window, on purpose that I might not miss you.

LUCY. My stars! Now I'd wager a sixpence I went by while you were asleep.

SIR L. Sure enough, it must have been so — and I never dreamt it was so late, till I waked. Well, but my little girl, have you got nothing for me?

LUCY. Yes, but I have — I've got a letter for you in my pocket.

SIR L. I'faith! I guessed you weren't come empty-handed — well — let me see what the dear creature says.

LUCY (*takes letter from her apron pocket*). There, Sir Lucius. (*Gives him a letter.*)

SIR L. (*reads*). "Sir. — There is often a sudden incentive impulse in love, that has a greater induction than years of domestic combination; such was the commotion I felt at the first superfluous view of Sir Lucius O'Trigger." Very pretty, upon my word! "Female punctuation forbids me to say more; yet let me add, that it will give me joy infallible to find Sir Lucius worthy the last criterion of my affections.

"Yours, while meretricious, DELIA."

Upon my conscience! Lucy, your lady is a great mistress of language! 'Faith! she's quite the queen of the dictionary; for the devil a word dare refuse coming at her call — though one would think it was quite out of hearing.

LUCY (L.). Ay, sir, a lady of her experience.

SIR L. (R.). Experience! What, at seventeen?

LUCY. Oh, true, sir — but then she reads so — my stars, how she will read off hand!

SIR L. 'Faith, she must be very deep read, to write

this way — though she is rather an arbitrary writer, too — for here are a great many poor words pressed into the service of this note, that would get their *habeas corpus* from any court in Christendom. However, when affection guides the pen, he must be a brute who finds fault with the style.

(Crosses L.)

LUCY (*crosses to R.*). Ah! Sir Lucius, if you were to hear how she talks of you!

SIR L. Oh, tell her I'll make her the best husband in the world, and Lady O'Trigger into the bargain! But we must get the old gentlewoman's consent, and do everything fairly.

LUCY (R. C.). Nay, Sir Lucius, I thought you wa'n't rich enough to be so nice.

SIR L. (L. C.). Upon my word, young woman, you have hit it; I am so poor, that I can't afford to do a dirty action. If I did not want money, I'd steal your mistress and her fortune with a great deal of pleasure. However, my pretty girl — (*searches in his pockets*) my money is like a stray colt in a field. You have to chase it into a corner to catch it. (*Gives her money.*) Here's a little something to buy you a ribband; and meet me in the evening, and I will give you an answer to this. So, hussy, take a kiss beforehand, to put you in mind. (*Kisses her.*)

LUCY. Oh, lud! Sir Lucius. I never see such a gentleman! My lady won't like you, if you're so impudent.

SIR L. 'Faith, she will, Lucy — that same — pho! what's the name of it? — modesty — is a quality in a lover more praised by the women than liked; so, if your mistress asks you whether Sir Lucius ever gave you a kiss, tell her fifty, my dear.

LUCY. What, would you have me tell her a lie?

SIR L. Ah, then, you baggage! I'll make it a truth presently. (*Kisses her.*)

LUCY. For shame, now; here is some one coming.

SIR L. O'faith, I'll quiet your conscience!

(*Kisses her again.*)

Enter FAG, L. I E, starts, coughs slightly. SIR LUCIUS turns, coughs boldly in answer, crosses to L. in front, shaking his whip, and makes a thrust at FAG'S ribs as he passes, passes his whip to his left hand, takes off his hat, bows ceremoniously to LUCY, replaces his hat, cuts the air once or twice with the whip as he looks at FAG, who, apparently mes-

merized by SIR LUCIUS'S manner, instinctively takes off his hat. SIR LUCIUS swaggers toward him, L. I E., singing.

“ Oh, love is the soul of a gay Irishman;
He loves all that is lovely, loves all that he can,
With his brogue and his blarney and bothering ways.”

Exit L. I E.

FAG (L.). So, so, ma'am. I humbly beg pardon.

LUCY (R.). Oh, lud! Now, Mr. Fag—you flurry one so!

FAG. Come, come, Lucy, here's no one by—so a little less simplicity, with a grain or two more sincerity, if you please. You play false with us, madam; I saw you give the baronet a letter. My master shall know this, and if he don't call him out, I will.

LUCY (R. C.). Ha! ha! ha! You gentlemen's gentlemen are so hasty! That letter was from Mrs. Malaprop, simpleton. She is taken with Sir Lucius's address.

FAG (L. C.). How! What taste some people have! Why, I suppose I have walked by her window an hundred times. But what says our young lady? Any message to my master?

LUCY. Sad news, Mr. Fag! A worse rival than Acres? Sir Anthony Absolute has proposed his son.

FAG. What, Captain Absolute?

LUCY. Even so. I overheard it all.

FAG. Ha! ha! ha! Very good, 'faith! Good bye, Lucy, I must away with this news. *(Crosses R.)*

LUCY. Well, you may laugh, but it is true, I assure you. *(Going L., but as she reaches entrance, turns back and calls.)* But, Mr. Fag, tell your master not to be cast down by this. *(Starts toward entrance again.)*

FAG *(who has gone toward R., turns back as LUCY calls.)* Oh, he'll be so disconsolate. *(Starts toward entrance at R.)*

LUCY *(turning back again and calling)*. And, Mr. Fag *(FAG returns from R. to C.)*, charge him not to think of quarrelling with young Absolute.

FAG. Never fear—never fear.

(LUCY goes toward L. and FAG toward R.)

LUCY *(turning back and calling)*. And, oh, Mr. Fag *(FAG returns again from R. to C.)*, be sure to bid him keep up his spirits.

WARN curtain.

FAG. We will, we will. (*Goes to R., and LUCY goes to L.*)

LUCY. And, oh, Mr. Fag. (*Turning back to C., and meeting FAG who turns from R. Looks at him a moment.*) Oh, nothing.

(*Goes towards L., leaving FAG in middle of the stage.*)

FAG. Oh, Lucy!

(*LUCY turns back to centre, and comes quite close to him. He points up in the air with his whip; LUCY gazes upward. He kisses her, slaps his hat on his head, puts his whip under his arm, and, as LUCY runs off L. I E., goes swaggering off R. I E., singing in imitation of SIR LUCIUS.*)

RING curtain.

“Oh Love is the soul of a gay Irishman,” etc.

SLOW CURTAIN.

ACT III.

Scene I. — *The North Parade, first grooves.*

Enter CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE, L. I E.

CAPT. A. (C.). 'Tis just as Fag told me, indeed! Whimsical enough, 'faith! My father wants to force me to marry the very girl I am plotting to run away with! He must not know of my connexion with her yet awhile. He has too summary a method of proceeding in these matters; however, I'll read my recantation instantly. My conversion is something sudden, indeed; but I can assure him, it is very sincere. So, so, here he comes — he looks plaguey gruff!
(*Steps aside L.*)

Enter SIR ANTHONY, R. I E.

SIR A. (C.). No — I'll die sooner than forgive him! Die, did I say? I'll live these fifty years to plague him. At our

last meeting his impudence had almost put me out of temper — an obstinate, passionate, self-willed boy! Who can he take after? Must be his mother! This is my return for getting him before all his brothers and sisters; for putting him, at twelve years old, into a marching regiment, and allowing him fifty pounds a year, besides his pay, ever since! But I have done with him — he's anybody's son for me — I never will see him more — never — never — never — never.

CAPT. A. Now for a penitential face!

(Comes forward on the l. c.)

SIR A. Fellow, get out of my way! *(Crosses L.)*

CAPT. A. Sir, you see a penitent before you.

SIR A. *(keeping his back to the CAPTAIN)*. I see an impudent scoundrel behind me.

CAPT. A. I have been revolving and reflecting and considering on your past goodness and kindness and condescension to me.

SIR A. Well, sir?

CAPT. A. I have been likewise weighing and balancing what you were pleased to mention concerning duty and obedience and authority.

SIR A. Well, sir?

(Turning toward him.)

CAPT. A. I am come to acknowledge my error, and to submit to your will.

SIR A. Why, now you talk sense, absolute sense; I never heard anything more sensible in my life. Confound you, you shall be Jack again!

CAPT. A. I am happy in the appellation.

SIR A. *(taking JACK by the hands)*. Why, then, Jack, my dear Jack, I will now inform you who the lady really is. Nothing but your passion and violence, you silly fellow, prevented me telling you at first. Prepare, Jack, for wonder and rapture — prepare! What think you of Miss Lydia Languish?

CAPT. A. *(R. C.)*. Languish! What, the Languishes of Worcestershire?

SIR A. *(L. C.)*. Worcestershire! No! Did you never meet Mrs. Malaprop and her niece, Miss Languish, who came into our county just before you were last ordered to your regiment.

CAPT. A. Malaprop! Languish! I don't remember ever to have heard the name before. Yet, stay; I think I do

recollect something. Languish — Languish! She squints, don't she? A little red-haired girl?

SIR A. Squints! A red-haired girl! Zounds, no!

CAPT. A. Then I must have forgot; it can't be the same person.

SIR A. Jack, Jack! What think you of blooming, love-breathing seventeen?

CAPT. A. As to that, sir, I am quite indifferent; if I can please you in the matter, 'tis all I desire.

SIR A. Nay, but Jack, such eyes! Such eyes! So innocently wild! So bashfully irresolute! Not a glance but speaks and kindles some thought of love! Then, Jack, her cheeks — her cheeks, Jack! So deeply blushing at the insinuations of her tell-tale eyes! Then, Jack, her lips! Oh, Jack, lips, smiling at their own discretion; and, if not smiling, more sweetly pouting — more lovely in sullenness! Then, Jack, her neck! Oh! Jack! Jack! (*Crosses to R.*)

CAPT. A. (L. C.). And which is to be mine, sir; the niece, or the aunt?

SIR A. (R. C.). Why, you unfeeling, insensible puppy, I despise you! When I was of your age, such a description would have made me fly like a rocket! The aunt, indeed! Odds life! When I ran away with your mother, I would not have touched any thing old or ugly to gain an empire.

CAPT. A. Oh, yes, you would.

SIR A. No, sir.

CAPT. A. Oh, yes, you would.

SIR A. No, sir.

CAPT. A. Not to please your father, sir?

SIR A. Not to please the devil!

CAPT. A. Not to please your father, sir?

SIR A. To please my father — zounds! Not to please — Oh! my father? Oddso! yes, yes; if my father, indeed, had desired — that's quite another matter. Though he wasn't the indulgent father that I am, Jack.

CAPT. A. I dare say not, sir.

SIR A. But, Jack, you are not sorry to find your mistress is so beautiful?

CAPT. A. Sir, I repeat it, if I please you in this affair, 'tis all I desire. Not that I think a woman the worse for being handsome; but, sir, if you please to recollect, you before hinted something about a hump or two, one eye, and a few more graces of that kind. Now, without being very nice, I

own I should rather choose a wife of mine to have the usual number of limbs, and a limited quantity of back; and though one eye may be very agreeable, yet, as the prejudice has always run in favour of two, I would not wish to affect a singularity in that article.

SIR A. What a phlegmatic sot it is! Why, sirrah, you are an anchorite — a vile, insensible stock! You a soldier! You're a walking block, fit only to dust the company's regimentals on! Odds life, I've a great mind to marry the girl myself!

CAPT. A. I am entirely at your disposal, sir; if you should think of addressing Miss Languish yourself, I suppose you would have me marry the aunt; or if you should change your mind, and take the old lady, 'tis the same to me — I'll marry the niece.

(SIR ANTHONY turns in disgust to go R.; CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE laughs behind SIR ANTHONY'S back, and continues laughing until SIR ANTHONY turns toward him again, when he suddenly assumes his serious, humble, respectful expression and attitude.)

READY to change set.

SIR A. (*turning*). Upon my word, Jack, thou art either a very great hypocrite, or — but, come, I know your indifference on such a subject, must be all a lie — I'm sure it must. Come, now, damn your demure face — come, confess, Jack, you have been lying, ha'n't you? You have been playing the hypocrite, hey? I'll never forgive you, if you ha'n't been lying and playing the hypocrite.

CAPT. A. I am sorry, sir, that the respect and duty which I bear to you, should be so mistaken.

SIR A. Hang your respect and duty! But come along with me. (*Crosses to L.*) I'll write a note to Mrs. Malaprop, and you shall visit the lady directly. Her eyes shall be the Promethean torch to you — come along, I'll never forgive you, if you don't come back stark mad with rapture and impatience — if you don't, 'egad, I'll marry the girl myself

Exeunt L. I E.

CHANGE set.

Scene II. — JULIA'S *dressing-room, first grooves.* *Tormentor doors used, if they are in the theatre.*

Enter FAULKLAND, L. I E.

FAUL. They told me Julia would return directly; I wonder she is not yet come! How mean does this captious, unsatisfied temper of mine appear to my cooler judgment! What tender, honest joy sparkled in her eyes, when we met! How delicate was the warmth of her expressions! Yet I must be satisfied that she has not been so very happy in my absence. She is coming —

Enter JULIA, R. I E.

JUL. I had not hoped to see you again so soon.

FAUL. Could I, Julia, be contented with my first welcome, restrained, as we were, by the presence of a third person?

JUL. Oh, Faulkland! When your kindness can make me thus happy, let me not think that I discovered something of coolness in your first salutation.

FAUL. 'Twas but your fancy, Julia. I was rejoiced to see you — to see you in such health; sure I had no cause for coldness!

JUL. Nay, then, I see you have taken something ill; you must not conceal from me what it is.

FAUL. Well, then, shall I own to you that my joy at hearing of your health and arrival here, by your neighbour Acres, was somewhat damped by his dwelling much on the high spirits you had enjoyed in Devonshire; on your mirth — your singing — dancing — and I know not what! For such is my temper, Julia, that I should regard every mirthful moment in your absence as a treason to constancy.

JUL. Must I never cease to tax my Faulkland with this teasing, minute caprice? Can the idle reports of a silly boor weigh, in your breast, against my tried affection?

FAUL. They have no weight with me, Julia; no, no, I am happy, if you have been so — yet only say that you did not sing with mirth — say that you thought of Faulkland in the dance.

JUL. I never can be happy in your absence.

FAUL. You were ever all goodness to me! Oh, I am a brute, when I but admit a doubt of your true constancy!

JUL. If ever, without such cause from you as I will not suppose possible, you find my affections veering but a point, may I become a proverbial scoff for levity and base ingratitude!

FAUL. Ah, Julia! I would I had no title to your gratitude! Search your heart, Julia; perhaps what you have mistaken for love is but the warm effusion of a too thankful heart!

JUL. For what quality must I love you?

FAUL. For no quality. To regard me for any quality of mind or understanding, were only to esteem me! And for person—I have often wished myself deformed, to be convinced that I owed no obligation there for any part of your affection.

JUL. I see you are determined to be unkind. The contract, which my poor father bound us in, gives you more than a lover's privilege.

FAUL. Again, Julia, you raise ideas that feed and justify my doubts. How shall I be sure, had you remained unbound in thought or promise, that I should still have been the object of your persevering love?

JUL. Then try me now. Let us be free as strangers—as to what is past; my heart will not feel more liberty.

FAUL. There, now! So hasty, Julia! So anxious to be free! If your love for me were fixed and ardent, you would not loose your hold, even though I wished it!

READY to change set.

JUL. I know not whither your insinuations would tend, but as they seem pressing to insult me, I will spare you the regret of having done so—I have given you no cause for this!

Exit crying, R. I E.

FAUL. In tears! Stay, Julia—stay, but for a moment. Yet I deserve it. What, after so long an absence, to quarrel with her tenderness! 'Twas barbarous and unmanly! I should be ashamed to see her now. I'll wait till her just resentment is abated, and when I distress her so again, may I lose her forever.

Exit, L. I E.

CHANGE set.

Scene III. — MRS. MALAPROP'S lodgings, second grooves; chairs R. and L. of C.; doors in second grooves and C.

Enter MRS. MALAPROP, through C. door from L., with a letter in her hand; CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE following.

MRS. M. Your being Sir Anthony's son, Captain, would itself be a sufficient accommodation; but from the ingenuity of your appearance, I am convinced you deserve the character here given of you.

CAPT. A. (L.). Permit me to say, madam, that as I have never yet had the pleasure of seeing Miss Languish, my principal inducement in this affair, at present, is the honour of being allied to Mrs. Malaprop, of whose intellectual accomplishments, elegant manners, and unaffected learning, no tongue is silent.

MRS. M. (R.). Sir, you do me infinite honour! I beg, Captain, you'll be seated. (CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE puts chairs forward. Both stand bowing, each motioning the other to sit first. Finally MRS. MALAPROP sits at R., the CAPTAIN follows her example at L.) Ah! few gentlemen, nowadays, know how to value the ineffectual qualities in a woman! Few think how a little knowledge becomes a gentlewoman! Men have no sense now but for the worthless flower of beauty.

CAPT. A. It is but too true, indeed, ma'am; yet I fear our ladies should share the blame; they think our admiration of beauty so great, that knowledge, in them, would be superfluous. Thus, like garden trees, they seldom show fruit, till time has robbed them of the more specious blossoms. Few, like Mrs. Malaprop and the orange-tree, are rich in both at once.

(Both rise, bow and curtsy elaborately, and sit again.)

MRS. M. Sir, you overpower me with good breeding. (Aside.) He is the very pine-apple of politeness! (Aloud.) You are not ignorant, Captain, that this giddy girl has, somehow, contrived to fix her affections on a beggarly, strolling, eaves-dropping ensign, whom none of us have seen, and nobody knows anything of.

CAPT. A. Oh, I have heard the silly affair before. I'm not at all prejudiced against her on that account. But it must be very distressing indeed, to you, ma'am.

MRS. M. Oh, it gives me the hydrostatics to such a degree! I thought she had persisted from corresponding

with him; but behold, this very day, I have interceded another letter from the fellow — I believe I have it in my pocket.

CAPT. A. (*aside*). Oh, the devil! My last note!

MRS. M. Ay, here it is.

CAPT. A. (*aside*). Ay, my note, indeed! Oh, the little traitress Lucy!

MRS. M. There, perhaps you may know the writing.

(*Gives him the letter.*)

CAPT. A. I think I have seen the hand before — yes, I certainly must have seen this hand before. (*Offers it back.*)

MRS. M. Nay, but read it, Captain.

CAPT. A. (*reads*). “My soul’s idol, my adored Lydia!” Very tender, indeed!

MRS. M. Tender! Ay, and profane too, o’ my conscience.

CAPT. A. “I am excessively alarmed at the intelligence you send me, the more so as my new rival” —

MRS. M. That’s you, sir.

CAPT. A. “Has universally the character of being an accomplished gentleman, and a man of honour.” Well, that’s handsome enough.

MRS. M. Oh, the fellow has some design in writing so.

CAPT. A. That he had, I’ll answer for him, ma’am.

MRS. M. But go on, sir — you’ll see presently.

CAPT. A. “As for the old weather-beaten she-dragon, who guards you” — who can he mean by that?

MRS. M. Me, sir — (*Rises in a rage and goes down R. and back again.*) Me, sir. I am “the old weather-beaten she-dragon.” Me! He means me there — what do you think now? But go on a little further. (*Sits.*)

CAPT. A. Impudent scoundrel! — “it shall go hard, but I will elude her vigilance; as I am told that the same ridiculous vanity which makes her dress up her coarse features and deck her dull chat with hard words which she don’t understand” —

MRS. M. There, sir, an attack upon my language! What do you think of that? An aspersion upon my parts of speech! Was ever such a brute! Sure, if I reprehend anything in this world, it is the use of my oracular tongue, and a nice derangement of epitaphs.

CAPT. A. He deserves to be hanged and quartered! Let me see — “same ridiculous vanity” —

MRS. M. You need not read it again, sir!

CAPT. A. I beg pardon, ma'am — "does also lay her open to the grossest deceptions from flattery and pretended admiration" — an impudent coxcomb — "so that I have a scheme to see you shortly, with the old harridan's consent, and even to make her a go-between in our interviews." Was ever such assurance!

MRS. M. Did you ever hear anything like it? (*They rise.*) He'll elude my vigilance, will he? Yes, yes! Ha! ha! He's very likely to enter these doors! We'll try who can plot best! (*CAPTAIN puts chairs back.*)

CAPT. A. (L. C.). So we will, ma'am — so we will. Ha! ha! ha! A conceited puppy! Ha! ha! ha! Well, but Mrs. Malaprop, as the girl seems so infatuated by this fellow, suppose you were to wink at her corresponding with him for a little time — let her even plot an elopement with him — then do you connive at her escape — while I, just in the nick, will have the fellow laid by the heels, and fairly contrive to carry her off in his stead.

MRS. M. (C.). I am delighted with the scheme; never was anything better perpetrated.

CAPT. A. But, pray, could I not see the lady for a few minutes now? I should like to try her temper a little.

MRS. M. Why, I don't know — I doubt she is not prepared for a visit of this kind. There is a decorum in these matters.

CAPT. A. O Lord, she won't mind me! Only tell her, Beverley —

MRS. M. Sir!

CAPT. A. (*aside, coming down L.*). Gently, good tongue!

MRS. M. What did you say of Beverley?

CAPT. A. Oh, I was going to propose that you should tell her, by way of jest, that it was Beverley who was below — she'd come down fast enough then. Ha! ha! ha!

MRS. M. 'Twould be a trick she well deserves — besides, you know, the fellow tells her he'll get my consent to see her — ha! ha! Let him, if he can, I say again. (*Calling off R.*) Lydia, come down here! (*To CAPTAIN.*) He'll make me a go-between in their interviews! Ha! ha! ha! (*Calling.*) Come down, I say, Lydia! (*To CAPTAIN.*) I don't wonder at your laughing — ha! ha! ha! His impudence is truly ridiculous.

CAPT. A. (C.). 'Tis very ridiculous, upon my soul, ma'am! Ha! ha! ha!

MRS. M. (R. C.). The little hussy won't hear. Well, I'll go and tell her at once who it is — she shall know that Captain Absolute is come to wait on her; and I'll make her behave as becomes a young woman.

CAPT. A. As you please, ma'am.

MRS. M. For the present, Captain, your servant. Ah, you've not done laughing yet, I see — elude my vigilance! Ha! ha! ha! He'll make me a go-between! Ha! ha! ha!

CAPT. A. (*laughing heartily*). Make you a go-between! Ha! ha! ha!

MRS. M. Ha! ha! ha!

Exit, R. I E.

CAPT. A. Ha! ha! ha! One would think, now, that I might throw off all disguise at once, and seize my prize with security; but such is Lydia's caprice, that, to undeceive, were probably to lose her. I'll see whether she knows me.

(*Walks aside, L., surveying the pictures.*)

Enter LYDIA, R. I E.

LYD. (R.). What a scene am I now to go through! Surely nothing can be more dreadful than to be obliged to listen to the loathsome addresses of a stranger to one's heart. I have heard of girls persecuted, as I am, who have appealed, in behalf of their favoured lover, to the generosity of his rival; suppose I were to try it. There stands the hated rival — an officer too; but, oh, how unlike my Beverley! I wonder he don't begin — truly, he seems a very negligent wooer! Quite at his ease, upon my word! I'll speak first. Mr. Absolute!

CAPT. A. (L.). Ma'am. (*Turns round to c.*)

LYD. Oh, heavens! Beverley! (*Rushes into his arms.*)

CAPT. A. Hush — hush, my life! Softly! Be not surprised! (*Embraces her.*)

LYD. I am so astonished — and so terrified — and so overjoyed! For heaven's sake, how came you here?

CAPT. A. Briefly — I have deceived your aunt. I was informed that my new rival was to visit here this evening, and, contriving to have him kept away, have passed myself on her for Captain Absolute.

LYD. Oh, charming! And she really takes you for young Absolute?

CAPT. A. Oh, she's convinced of it.

LYD. Ha! ha! ha! I can't forbear laughing, to think how her sagacity is overreached.

CAPT. A. But we trifle with our precious moments — such another opportunity may not occur — then let me now conjure my kind, my condescending angel, to fix the time when I may rescue her from undeserved persecution, and, with a licensed warmth, plead for my reward.

LYD. Will you then, Beverley, consent to forfeit that portion of my paltry wealth — that burden on the wings of love?

CAPT. A. Oh, come to me — rich only thus — in loveliness! Bring no portion to me but thy love — 'twill be generous in you, Lydia, for well you know, it is the only dower your poor Beverley can repay.

LYD. (*aside*). How persuasive are his words — how charming will poverty be with him!

CAPT. A. By heavens, I would fling all goods of fortune from me with a prodigal hand, to enjoy the scene where I might clasp my Lydia to my bosom, and say, the world affords no smile to me but here. (*Embracing her, and speaking over her shoulder; aside*.) If she holds out now, the devil is in it.

LYD. (*aside*). Now could I fly with him to the Antipodes — but my persecution is not yet come to a crisis.

(*Goes R. C.*)

Enter MRS. MALAPROP, C., *listening*.

MRS. M. (*aside*). I am impatient to know how the little hussy deports herself.

CAPT. A. (L. C.). So pensive, Lydia! Is then your warmth abated?

MRS. M. (*aside*). Warmth abated? So! She has been in a passion, I suppose.

LYD. No, nor ever can, while I have life.

MRS. M. (*aside*). An ill-tempered little devil! She'll be in a passion all her life, will she?

LYD. Let her choice be Captain Absolute, but Beverley is mine.

MRS. M. (*aside*). I am astonished at her insurance! To his face — this to his face!

CAPT. A. Thus, then, let me enforce my suit.

(*Kneeling*.)

MRS. M. (*aside*). Ay — poor young man! — down on his knees entreating for pity! — I can contain no longer. (*Comes down between them.*) Why, thou vixen! I have overheard you.

CAPT. A. (*aside*). Oh, confound her vigilance! (*Rises.*)

MRS. M. (C.). Captain Absolute — I know not how to apologize for her shocking rudeness.

CAPT. A. (*aside, down L.*). So — all's safe, I find. (*Aloud.*) I have hopes, madam, that time will bring the young lady —

MRS. M. Oh, there's nothing to be hoped for from her! She's as headstrong as an allegory on the banks of Nile.

LYD.(R.). Nay, madam, what do you charge me with now?

MRS. M. Why, thou unblushing rebel — didn't you tell this gentleman to his face, that you loved another better? Didn't you say you never would be his?

LYD. No, madam, I did not.

MRS. M. Good heavens, what insurance! Lydia, Lydia, you ought to know that lying don't become a young woman! Didn't you boast that Beverley — that stroller Beverley — possessed your heart? Tell me that, I say!

READY to change set.

LYD. 'Tis true, ma'am, and none but Beverley —

MRS. M. Hold — hold, assurance! You shall not be so rude.

CAPT. A. (L. C.). Nay, pray, Mrs. Malaprop, don't stop the young lady's speech; she's very welcome to talk thus — it does not hurt me in the least, I assure you.

MRS. M. You are too good, Captain — too amiably patient; but come with me, miss. Let us see you again soon, Captain — remember what we have fixed.

CAPT. A. I shall, ma'am.

MRS. M. Come, take a graceful leave of the gentleman.

LYD. May every blessing wait on my Beverley, my loved Bever —
(MRS. MALAPROP prevents her speaking.)

MRS. M. Hussy! Come along — come along.

Exit CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE, L. I E., *kissing his hand to* LYDIA;
MRS. MALAPROP *pushes* LYDIA *off* R. I E.

CHANGE set.

Scene IV. — ACRES'S lodgings. *Dressing-table and toilet-glass, etc., R. Writing-table and two chairs, L. Writing-tablet, written letters, etc., on table. DAVID pushes this table forward, L., as scene opens, and places chairs R. and L. of it. Sofa R. C. down stage, with small table by it. Doors R. and L. in second entrance.*

ACRES (*at toilet-glass, brushing hair*). Indeed, David — dress does make a difference, David.

DAV. (*at table*). 'Tis all in all, I think — difference ! Why, an' you were to go now to Clod Hall, I am certain the old lady wouldn't know you ; Master Butler wouldn't believe his own eyes, and Mrs. Pickle would cry, "Lard presarve me ;" our dairy maid would come giggling to the door, and I warrant Dolly Tester, your honour's favourite, would blush like my waistcoat. Oons ! I'll wager a gallon, there an't a dog in the house but would bark, and I question whether Phillis would wag a hair of her tail !

ACRES. Ay, David, there's nothing like polishing.

DAV. (L.). So I says of your honour's boots ; but the boy never heeds me !

ACRES (R.). But, David, has Mr. De la Grace been here ? I must rub up my balancing, and chasing, and boring.

DAV. I'll call again, sir. (*Going toward L. 2 E.*)

ACRES (C.). Do — and see if there are any letters for me at the post-office.

DAV. I will. By the mass ! I can't help looking at your head ! If I hadn't been at the cooking, I wish I may die if should have known the dish again myself !

Exit, L. 2 E.

ACRES (*coming forward with dancing step*). Sink, slide — coupee. Confound the first inventors of cotillions, say I ! They are as bad as algebra to us country gentlemen. I can walk a minuet easy enough, when I am forced ; and I have been accounted a good stick in a country dance. Odds jigs and tabors ! I never valued your cross-over to couple — figure in — right and left — and I'd foot it with e'er a captain in the country ; but these outlandish heathen allemandes and cotillions are quite beyond me ! I shall never prosper at them, that's sure. Mine are true-born English legs — they don't understand their cursed French lingo — their *pas*

this, and *pas* that, and *pas* t'other. Damn me! my feet don't like to be called paws!

Enter DAVID, L. 2 E. *He tries to speak, but is unable to do so for some seconds on account of laughter. At last he sputters out.*

DAV. Sir Lucifer O'Tiger to wait on yous.

ACRES. Sir Lucius O'Trigger, you blockhead! Show him up.

DAV. (*calling at door*). Sir Lucius O'Trigger, you blockhead, come up.

Enter SIR LUCIUS O'TRIGGER, L. 2 E.; **exit** DAVID *at same door.*

SIR L. (L.). Mr. Acres, I am delighted to see you.

ACRES (R.). My dear Sir Lucius, I kiss your hands.

SIR L. Pray, my friend, what has brought you so suddenly to Bath?

ACRES. 'Faith, I have followed Cupid's jack-a-lantern; and find myself in a quagmire at last! In short, I have been very ill-used, Sir Lucius. I don't choose to mention names, but look on me as a very ill-used gentleman.

(*Indicates chair.*)

SIR L. (*sits R. on sofa*). Pray, what is the case? I ask no names.

ACRES (*sits L. at R. of table*). Mark me, Sir Lucius; I fall as deep as need be in love with a young lady — her friends take my part — I follow her to Bath — send word of my arrival — and receive answer, that the lady is to be otherwise disposed of. This, Sir Lucius, I call being ill-used.

SIR L. Very ill, upon my conscience! Pray, can you divine the cause of it?

ACRES. Why, there's the matter; she has another lover, one Beverley, who, I am told, is now in Bath. Odds slanders and lies! he must be at the bottom of it.

SIR L. A rival in the case, is there? And you think he has supplanted you unfairly?

ACRES. Unfairly! To be sure he has. He never could have done it fairly.

SIR L. Then sure you know what is to be done.

ACRES. Not I, upon my soul!

SIR L. We wear no swords here, but you understand me?

(SIR LUCIUS raises his finger and thumb toward R., as if pointing pistol. ACRES looks at his hand, follows the direction with his eyes, then looks back vacantly at SIR LUCIUS.)

ACRES (*innocently*). No, I don't. (SIR LUCIUS imitates the shot of a pistol.) What! Fight him!

SIR L. Ay, to be sure; what can I mean else?

ACRES. But he has given me no provocation.

SIR L. Now, I think he has given you the greatest provocation in the world. Can a man commit a more heinous offence against another, than to fall in love with the same woman? Oh, by my soul, it is the most unpardonable breach of friendship.

ACRES. Breach of friendship! Ay, ay; but I have no acquaintance with this man. I never saw him in my life.

SIR L. That's no argument at all—he has the less right, then, to take such a liberty.

ACRES. 'Gad, that's true—I grow full of anger, Sir Lucius—I fire apace! Odds hilts and blades! I find a man may have a deal of valour in him, and not know it! But couldn't I contrive to have a little right on my side?

SIR L. What the devil signifies right when your honour is concerned? Do you think Achilles, or my little Alexander the Great, ever inquired where the right lay? No, by my soul, they drew their broad swords, and left the lazy sons of peace to settle the justice of it.

ACRES (*rising*). Your words are a grenadier's march to my heart! I believe courage must be catching! I certainly do feel a kind of valour arising, as it were—a kind of courage, as I may say. Odds flints, pans and triggers! I'll challenge him directly. (*Crosses to c.*)

SIR L. (*rising*). Ah, my little friend (*putting his hat on table, R. C., and crossing to table at L.*), if we had Blunderbuss Hall here, I could show you a range of ancestry in the O'Trigger line, that would furnish the New Room, every one of whom had killed his man! For though the mansion-house and dirty acres—

ACRES. Dirty Acres! Sir Lucius! Oh!

SIR L. Have slipped through our fingers—

ACRES. Oh, Sir Lucius, oh!

SIR L. —have slipped through my fingers, I thank heaven, our honour and the family pictures are as fresh as ever.

ACRES. Oh, Sir Lucius, I have had ancestors too — every man of them colonel or captain.

SIR L. Indeed!

ACRES. In the militia! odds nails and barrels! say no more — I'm braced for it. The thunder of your words has soured the milk of human kindness in my breast! Zounds! as the man in the play says, "I could do such deeds — I could drink hot blood."

SIR L. Come, come, there must be no passion at all in the case — these things should always be done civilly.

ACRES. I must be in a passion, Sir Lucius — I must be in a rage. Dear Sir Lucius, let me be in a rage, if you love me. (*Returns to table.*) Come, here's pen and paper. I would the ink were red! Indite, I say, indite! How shall I begin? Odds bullets and blades! I'll write a good bold hand however.

SIR L. Pray, compose yourself.

ACRES. No, compose yourself. (*Crosses, and sits L. of table.*) Come — now, shall I begin with an oath? Do, Sir Lucius, let me begin with a damme?

SIR L. Pho! pho! Do the thing decently, and like a Christian. Begin now — "Sir," — (*At R. of table; sits.*)

ACRES. That's too civil, by half.

SIR L. Plain sir. (*ACRES writes.*) "To prevent the confusion that might arise" —

ACRES. Well — (*Writing.*) "To prevent the contusion that might arise" —

SIR L. "From our both addressing the same lady" —

ACRES. Ay — "both undressing the same lady" — there's the reason — "same lady." Well —

SIR L. "I shall expect the honour of your company" —

ACRES. Zounds! I'm not asking him to dinner!

SIR L. Pray, be easy.

ACRES. Well, then (*writing*), "the honour of your" — (*Rising and reaching across table to whisper in SIR LUCIUS'S ear.*)

SIR L. Well, *K* may be most correct, but *C* is most common. "To settle our pretensions" —

ACRES. Well.

SIR L. Let me see — at — at — at — ah, to be sure, why not? "At King's Mead Field." Aye, King's Mead Field will do. "In King's Mead Field."

Enter DAVID from L. 2 E, and listens during the rest of the scene with visible alarm.

ACRES (*writing*). “Ah, ah, to be sure, why not? At King’s Mead Field. King’s Mead Field will do.”

SIR L. Damme! We’ll tickle him.

ACRES (*writing*). “Damme, we’ll tickle him.” (*Looking up to ejaculate with satisfaction*.) I’ve got a damme in after all.

SIR L. That’s the cut.

ACRES (*writing*). “That’s the cut.” (*Sitting back with satisfaction*.) So that’s done. (*Rises*.)

SIR L. (*taking the letter to read and correct it*). What’s this? “Plain sir!” Would you redress your wrongs by “undressing” a lady? “That’s the cut.” Cut that out. “Damme, we’ll tickle him.” Really, Mr. Acres, this won’t do at all. (*Corrects, and hands it back*.)

ACRES. Well, I’ll fold it up presently; my own crest, a hand and dagger, shall be the seal.

SIR L. You see, now, this little explanation will put a stop at once to all confusion or misunderstanding that might arise between you.

(*Rises, crosses to R. C., gets hat, and crosses back to L. C.*)

ACRES. Ay, we fight to prevent any misunderstanding.

SIR L. Now, I’ll leave you to fix your own time. Take my advice, and you’ll decide it this evening, if you can; then, let the worst come of it, ’twill be off your mind to-morrow.

ACRES. Very true.

SIR L. So I shall see nothing more of you, unless it be by letter, till the evening. I would do myself the honour to carry your message; but, to tell you a secret, I believe I shall have just such another affair on my own hands. There is a gay captain here who put a jest on me lately at the expense of my country, and I only want to fall in with the gentleman to fall out with him.

ACRES. By my valour, I should like to see you fight first! Odds life, I should like to see you kill him, if it was only to get a little lesson!

SIR L. I shall be very proud of instructing you. Well, for the present (*going*)—but remember now, when you meet your antagonist, do everything in a mild and agreeable

manner. Let your courage be as keen, but at the same time as polished, as your sword.

Exit SIR LUCIUS, L. 2 E. ACRES, *at table, folds and seals the letter.*

DAV. (*coming down from his position up stage, and standing L. C.*). Then, by the mass, sir, I would do no such thing! Ne'er a Sir Lucius O'Trigger in the kingdom should make me fight, when I wasn't so minded. Oons! what will the old lady say when she hears o't?

ACRES. But my honour, David, my honour! I must be very careful of my honour.

DAV. Ay, by the mass, and I would be very careful of it; and I think, in return, my honour couldn't do less than to be very careful of me.

ACRES. Odds blades! David, no gentleman will ever risk the loss of his honour!

DAV. I say, then, it would be but civil in honour never to risk the loss of a gentleman. Lookye, master, this honour seems to me to be a marvellous false friend; ay, truly, a very courtier-like servant. Put the case, I was a gentleman (which, thank heaven, no one can say of me); well — my honour makes me quarrel with another gentleman of my acquaintance. So — we fight. Pleasant enough that. Boh!

ACRES (*jumping with fear*). Don't do that.

DAV. (C.). I kill him — the more's my luck. Now, pray, who gets the profit of it? Why, my honour. But, put the case that he kills me! By the mass! I go to the worms, and my honour whips over to my enemy.

ACRES. No, David. In that case — odds crowns and laurels — your honour follows you to the grave!

DAV. (*down L.*). Now, that's just the place where I could make a shift to do without it.

ACRES (C.). Zounds! David, you are a coward! It doesn't become my valour to listen to you. What, shall I disgrace my ancestors? Think of that, David — think what it would be to disgrace my ancestors!

DAV. Under favour, the surest way of not disgracing them, is to keep as long as you can out of their company. Look ye, now, master, to go to them in such haste — with an ounce of lead in your brains — I should think it might as well be let alone. Our ancestors are very good kind of folks; but

they are the last people I should choose to have a visiting acquaintance with.

ACRES. But, David, now, you don't think there is such very, very — great danger, hey? Odds life! people often fight without any mischief done!

DAV. By the mass, I think 'tis ten to one against you! Oons! here to meet some lion-headed fellow, I warrant, with his damned double-barrelled swords, and cut-and-thrust pistols! Lord bless us! it makes me tremble to think on't — those be such desperate bloody-minded weapons! Well, I never could abide them. From a child I never could fancy them! I suppose there an't been so merciless a beast in the world as your loaded pistol!

ACRES. Zounds! I won't be afraid — odds fire and fury! you sha'n't make me afraid. Here is the challenge, and I'll send for my dear friend, Jack Absolute, to carry it for me.
(*Holds letter out at arm's length.*)

DAV. Ay, i' the name of mischief, let him be the messenger. For my part, I wouldn't lend a hand to it, for the best horse in your stable. By the mass! it don't look like another letter! It is, as I may say, a designing and malicious-looking letter, and I warrant smells of gunpowder, like a soldier's pouch! Oons! I wouldn't swear it mayn't go off.
(*ACRES drops the letter and starts back.*)

ACRES. Out, you poltroon! Pick it up.

DAV. (*shaking his head*). No. (*ACRES stoops to pick it up.*)
Boh!

ACRES (*starting back from the letter*). You ha'n't the valour of a grasshopper.

DAV. Well, I say no more — 'twill be sad news, to be sure, at Clod Hall! But I ha' done. How Phillis will howl when she hears of it — ay, poor bitch, she little thinks what shooting her master's going after — and I warrant old Crop, who has carried your honour, field and road, these ten years, will curse the hour he was born!

(*Whimpering.*)

ACRES. It won't do, David — I am determined to fight, so get along, you coward, while I'm in the mind.

DAVID **exit**, L. 2 E., *but re-enters at once still whimpering.*

DAV. Here be Captain Rabsolute to wait on you.

ACRES. Oh! show him him up.

DAV. Well, heaven send we be all alive this time to-morrow. *(Kneeling L., and about to pray.)*

ACRES. Get along, you cowardly, dastardly, croaking raven.

DAVID **exit**, *kicked off by ACRES*, L. 2 E.

A vile sheep-hearted blockhead!

(Returns to C., looks at letter still lying on floor. He walks round it slowly and suspiciously, keeping at a respectful distance from it, then stopping on the R. of it, stretches his foot as far in front of him as possible, and stamps on it. Finding it perfectly harmless, he picks it up, standing with his back to L.)

Enter CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE *unperceived*, L. 2 E.

If I had not the valour of St. George and the dragon to boot —

CAPT. A. *(touching him on the shoulder)*. Well, what did you want with me, Bob?

ACRES *(starting in alarm; drops the letter)*. Oh — ah!
(Stoops nervously and slowly to pick up letter again.)

CAPT. A. *(stoops also, and, forestalling ACRES, takes up the letter. Glances at it carelessly, almost unconsciously; as he sees the address, looks at ACRES and reads; aside, as he holds the letter)*. “To Ensign Beverley.” So what’s going on now? *(To BOB; aloud.)* Well, what’s this?

ACRES *(taking the letter by one corner with the tips of his fingers, as if afraid it would explode)*. A challenge!

CAPT. A. (L. C.). Indeed! Why, you won’t fight him, will you, Bob?

ACRES (R. C.). ’Egad, but I will, Jack. Sir Lucius has wrought me to it. He has left me full of rage, and I’ll fight this evening that so much good passion mayn’t be wasted.

CAPT. A. But what have I to do with this?

ACRES. Why, as I think you know something of this fellow, I want you to find him out for me, and give him this mortal defiance.

CAPT. A. Well, give it me, and trust me he gets it.

ACRES *(giving him the letter)*. Thank you, my dear friend, my dear — *(Anxious to get it back.)* But it’s giving you a great deal of trouble.

CAPT. A. (*nonchalantly*). Not in the least. I beg you won't mention it. No trouble in the world, I assure you.

ACRES. You are very kind. What it is to have a friend! You couldn't be my second, could you, Jack?

CAPT. A. Why, no, Bob — not in this affair; it would not be quite so proper.

ACRES. Well, then, I must get my friend, Sir Lucius. I shall have your good wishes, however, Jack?

CAPT. A. Whenever he meets you, believe me. Well, my little hero, success attend you. (*Going L. 2 E.*)

ACRES. Stay, stay, Jack. If Beverley should ask you what kind of a man your friend Acres is, do tell him I am a devil of a fellow — will you, Jack?

CAPT. A. (*turning back to L. c.*). To be sure, I shall. I'll say you are a determined dog — hey, Bob?

ACRES. Ay, do, do — and if that frightens him, 'egad, perhaps he mayn't come. So tell him I generally kill a man a-week, will you, Jack?

CAPT. A. I will — I will; I'll say you are called, in the country, "Fighting Bob."

ACRES. Right, right — 'tis all to prevent mischief; for I don't want to take his life, if I clear my honour.

CAPT. A. No! That's very kind of you.

WARN curtain.

ACRES. Why, you don't wish me to kill him, do you, Jack?

CAPT. A. No, upon my soul, I do not. But a devil of a fellow, hey? (*Going L. 2 E.*)

ACRES. True, true. But stay — stay, Jack; you may add, that you never saw me in such a rage before — a most devouring rage.

CAPT. A. I will, I will.

ACRES. Remember, Jack — a determined dog!

CAPT. A. Ay, ay, "Fighting Bob."

ACRES (*worked up*). Tell him I kill a man a week.

CAPT. A. (*at door, L. 2 E.*). I will.

ACRES. Tell him I kill a man a day.

CAPT. A. I will.

(*Opens door.*)

RING curtain.

ACRES (*going to R. 2 E., and calling back*). I say, Jack, tell him I keep a private graveyard to bury my own dead.

Exeunt ACRES, R. 2 E. ; CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE, L. 2 E.

QUICK CURTAIN.

ACT IV.

Scene I. — MRS. MALAPROP'S lodgings, third grooves. *Same set as Scene III. of Act III. Table and chairs R. C. Door C. in flat.*

Enter MRS. MALAPROP and LYDIA, R. I E.

MRS. M. (C.). Why, thou perverse one! Tell me what you can object to in him? Isn't he a handsome man? Tell me that. A genteel man — a pretty figure of a man?

LYD. (R. C., *aside*). She little thinks whom she is praising. (*Aloud.*) So is Beverley, ma'am.

MRS. M. No caparisons, miss, if you please. Caparisons are odorous and don't become a young woman. No! Captain Absolute is indeed a fine gentleman.

LYD. (*aside*). Ay, the Captain Absolute you have seen.

MRS. M. Then he's so well bred; so full of alacrity and adulation! He has so much to say for himself, in such good language, too. His physiognomy so grammatical; then his presence so noble! I protest, when I saw him, I thought of what Hamlet says in the play: "Hesperian curls — the front of Job himself; an eye, like March, to threaten at command; a station, like Harry Mercury, new" — something about kissing — on a hill — however, the similitude struck me directly.

LYD. (*aside*). How enraged she'll be presently, when she discovers her mistake!

Enter SERVANT, C. *from* L.

SER. Sir Anthony and Captain Absolute are below, ma'am.

MRS. M. Show them up here.

Exit SERVANT, C. *to* L.

Now, Lydia, I insist on your behaving as becomes a young woman. Show your good breeding, at least, though you have forgot your duty.

LYD. Madam, I have told you my resolution. I shall not only give him no encouragement, but I won't even speak to, or look at him.

(Flings herself into a chair, L. of table, R. C., with her face from the door.)

Enter SIR ANTHONY and CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE C. *from L.* The CAPTAIN comes along unwillingly, and just as they enter the room attempts to run away, but is caught by the coat-tails by SIR ANTHONY, and dragged in.

SIR A. (L. C.). Here we are, Mrs. Malaprop, come to mitigate the frowns of unrelenting beauty, — and difficulty enough I had to bring this fellow. I don't know what's the matter, but if I had not held him by force, he'd have given me the slip.

MRS. M. (R. C.). You have infinite trouble, Sir Anthony, in the affair. I am ashamed for the cause. *(Aside to her.)* Lydia, Lydia, rise, I beseech you. Pay your respects!

SIR A. I hope, madam, that Miss Languish has reflected on the worth of this gentleman, and the regard due to her aunt's choice, and my alliance. *(Aside to him.)* Now, Jack, speak to her.

CAPT. A. (L., *aside*). What the devil shall I do? *(Aloud.)* Sir, she won't even look at me whilst you are here. I knew she wouldn't — I told you so. Let me entreat you, sir, to leave us together!

(CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE seems to expostulate with SIR ANTHONY.)

SIR A. I say, sir, I won't stir a foot yet.

MRS. M. I am sorry to say, Sir Anthony, that my affluence over my niece is very small. *(Passing behind table, and speaking aside to LYDIA.)* Turn round, Lydia; I blush for you!

SIR A. May I not flatter myself that Miss Languish will assign what cause of dislike she can have to my son. Why don't you begin, Jack? *(Aside to him.)* Speak, you puppy, — speak!

MRS. M. It is impossible, Sir Anthony, she can have any. She will not say she has. *(Aside to her.)* Answer, hussy! Why don't you answer? *(Pushing her.)*

SIR A. Then, madam, I trust that a childish and hasty predilection will be no bar to Jack's happiness. (*Aside to him.*) Zounds! sirrah! Why don't you speak?

CAPT. A. (*crosses to C., nervously looking at LYDIA'S back.*) Hem! hem! Madam — hem! (CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE *attempts to speak, then returns to SIR ANTHONY.*) 'Faith! sir, I am so confounded — and so — so confused! I told you I should be so, sir, — I knew it. The — the tremour of my passion entirely takes away my presence of mind.

SIR A. (L.). But it don't take away your voice, fool, does it? Go up, and speak to her directly! (CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE *makes signs to MRS. MALAPROP to leave them together; aside to him.*) What the devil are you at? Unlock your jaws, sirrah, or —

CAPT. A. (*draws near LYDIA, and stands behind her chair. Aside.*) Now heaven send she may be too sullen to look round! I must disguise my voice. (*Speaks in a gruff, disguised voice.*) Will not Miss Languish lend an ear to the mild accents of true love? Will not —

SIR A. (*surprised, disgusted, and enraged, strides from L. to R. upper corner; then, advancing on CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE, strikes him smartly with his cane.*) What the devil ails the fellow? Why don't you speak out, and not stand croaking like a frog with the quinsy?

CAPT. A. The — the — excess of my awe and my — my modesty quite choke me.

SIR A. (*irritably.*) Ah! your modesty again! I'll tell you what, Jack; if you don't speak out directly, and glibly, too, I shall be in such a rage! Mrs. Malaprop, I wish the lady would favour us with something more than a side-front.

(MRS. MALAPROP *goes behind table and chides LYDIA; then crosses to L. C. to SIR ANTHONY.*)

CAPT. A. (*turning up his eyes with resignation. Aside.*) So! All will out, I see. (*Leans over LYDIA'S shoulder, R. C. up stage, and speaks warningly in a low voice.*) Be not surprised, my Lydia; suppress all surprise at present.

LYD. (*aside.*) Heavens! 'Tis Beverley's voice. (*Looks round by degrees. As her eyes reach CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE, who stands braced for the upshot, she starts up hurriedly, and clasping her hands in surprise, doubt, and delight, cries out.*) Is this possible — my Beverley! How can this be? My Beverley!

(Down R.)

CAPT. A. (*dropping his hands to his side. Aside*). Ah, 'tis all over. (*Crosses to extreme L.*)

SIR A. (*crossing from L. to L. C.*). Beverley! The devil! This is my son, Jack Absolute.

MRS. M. (*to R. C.*). For shame, hussy, — for shame. Your head runs so on that fellow that you have him always in your eyes; beg Captain Absolute's pardon directly.

LYD. (*down R., looking past MRS. MALAPROP and SIR ANTHONY to kiss her hand to CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE*). I see no Captain Absolute, but my beloved Beverley.

SIR A. Zounds, the girl's mad — her brain's turned by reading!

MRS. M. O' my conscience, I believe so! What do you mean by Beverley, hussy? You saw Captain Absolute before to-day; there he is — your husband that shall be.

LYD. With all my soul, ma'am — when I refuse my Beverley —

SIR A. Oh, she's as mad as bedlam. (*Pauses; turns toward L. to eye CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE suspiciously. The CAPTAIN meets SIR ANTHONY'S eyes, bites his lips, and drops his eyes.*) Or has this fellow been playing us a rogue's trick. Come here, sirrah. (*CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE approaches SIR ANTHONY, and stands before him with mock humility.*) Who the devil are you?

CAPT. A. (*half laughing*). Faith, sir, I am not quite clear myself; but I'll endeavour to recollect.

SIR A. Are you my son, or not? Answer for your mother, you dog, if you won't for me.

CAPT. A. (*aside*). Ye powers of impudence befriend me. (*Aloud, bowing before SIR ANTHONY with mock gravity.*) Sir Anthony, most assuredly I am your wife's son; and that I sincerely believe myself to be yours also, I hope my duty has always shown.

SIR A. (*coughing suspiciously*). H-e-e-m!

CAPT. A. (*crossing to MRS. MALAPROP, R. C., and bowing ceremoniously*). Mrs. Malaprop, I am your most respectful admirer, and shall be proud to add, affectionate nephew. I need not tell my Lydia (*crosses to her at R.*) that she sees her faithful Beverley, who, knowing the singular generosity of her temper, assumed that name and a station which has proved the test of the most disinterested love, which he now hopes to enjoy in a more elevated character.

(*Gets back to L. of SIR ANTHONY, who is at L. C.*)

LYD. So there's to be no elopement, after all.

(Goes up stage petulantly, and flings herself into the chair at table again.)

SIR A. *(eying CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE)*. Upon my soul, Jack, thou art a very impudent fellow! To do you justice, I think I never saw a piece of more consummate assurance!

CAPT. A. *(half laughing)*. Oh, you flatter me, sir, — you compliment. 'Tis my modesty, you know, sir, — my modesty, that has stood in my way.

SIR A. Well, I am glad you are not the dull insensible varlet you pretend to be, however! I'm glad you have made a fool of your father, you dog *(punches him slyly)*, I am. So, this was your penitence, your duty, and obedience! I thought it was damn'd sudden. You never heard their names before, not you! What, the Languishes of Worcestershire, hey? If you could please me in the affair, 'twas all you desired! Ah! you dissembling villain! What! *(Pointing to LYDIA)*. She squints, don't she? A little red-haired girl, hey? Why, you hypocritical young rascal — I wonder you a'n't ashamed to hold up your head!

CAPT. A. 'Tis with difficulty, sir — I am confused — very much confused, as you must perceive.

MRS. M. *(sits R. C.)*. Oh, lud! Sir Anthony! Ha! ha! ha! *(Pauses in the middle of the laugh. The entire expression of her face changes as the recollection of BEVERLEY'S letter suddenly returns to her.)* A new light breaks in upon me! Hey — how — what — captain! Did you write those letters, then? *(Rises and approaches CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE, who gets behind SIR ANTHONY.)* What! Am I to thank you for the elegant compilation of an "old weather-beaten she-dragon," — hey?

(CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE starts away in front of and around SIR ANTHONY. MRS. MALAPROP follows him, and stops at R. of SIR ANTHONY.)

SIR A. *(aside to CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE)*. Did you call her "an old weather-beaten she-dragon"?

(CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE nods assent. Both laugh, and realizing that MRS. MALAPROP is still trying to get at the CAPTAIN, become suddenly serious again.)

MRS. M. *(still trying to get at CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE)*. Oh, mercy! Was it you that reflected on my parts of speech?

(CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE *dodges round* SIR ANTHONY *again*, MRS. MALAPROP *following*, and *returning once more to R. of* SIR ANTHONY.)

CAPT. A. (*aside to* SIR ANTHONY). Dear sir, my modesty will be overpowered at last, if you don't assist me. I shall certainly not be able to stand it.

SIR A. Come, come, Mrs. Malaprop, we must forget and forgive. Odds life! matters have taken so clever a turn all of a sudden, that I could find it in my heart to be so good-humoured — and so gallant! Hey, Mrs. Malaprop? Come, we must leave them together, Mrs. Malaprop; they long to fly into each other's arms, I warrant! (*Aside to* CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE.) Jack, — isn't the cheek as I said, hey — and the eye, you rogue? And the lip — hey? (*To* MRS. MALAPROP.) Come, Mrs. Malaprop, we'll not disturb their tenderness — theirs is the time of life for happiness! (*Sings.*) "Youth's the season made for joy." Hey! Odds life! I'm in such spirits — I don't know what I could not do! Permit me, ma'am — (*Gives his hand to* MRS. MALAPROP; *sings.*) Tol de rol — gad, I should like to have a little footing myself. Tol de rol! de rol!

Exit singing, and handing MRS. MALAPROP *off, R. I E.*

CAPT. A. (*crossing from L. to behind* LYDIA'S *chair. She still sits sulking, with her back to him. Aside.*) So much thought bodes me no good. (*Takes up a chair, and puts it down noisily to attract her attention. Repeats the action. No response from* LYDIA. *Aloud.*) So grave, Lydia!

LYD. Sir!

CAPT. A. (*aside*). So! 'egad! I thought as much — that damned monosyllable has froze me! (*Aloud.*) What, Lydia, now that we are as happy in our friends' consent as in our mutual vows —

LYD. (*peevishly*). Friends' consent, indeed!

CAPT. A. Come, come, we must lay aside some of our romance — a little wealth and comfort may be endured, after all. (*Passes behind table, attempting to see her face.*) And for your fortune, the lawyers shall make such settlements as —

LYD. Lawyers! I hate lawyers! (*Turns to L., pouting.*)

CAPT. A. (*passing to L. of her; cheerfully*). Nay, then, we will not wait for their lingering forms, but instantly procure the license, and —

LYD. The license! I hate licenses! (*Flounces about to former position, with back to CAPTAIN.*)

CAPT. A. (*soothingly*). Then we'll have no license. Oh, my love, be not so unkind! Thus let me entreat — (*Kneeling.*)

LYD. Pshaw! What signifies kneeling, when you know I must have you?

CAPT. A. (*rising*). Nay, madam, there shall be no constraint upon your inclinations, I promise you. If I have lost your heart, I resign the rest. (*Aside.*) 'Gad, I must try what a little spirit will do! (*Crosses L.*)

LYD. (*rising*). Then, sir, let me tell you, the interest you had there was acquired by a mean, unmanly imposition, and deserves the punishment of fraud. What, you have been treating me like a child — humouring my romance, and laughing, I suppose, at your success!

CAPT. A. You wrong me, Lydia, you wrong me — only hear —

LYD. So while I fondly imagined we were deceiving my relations, and flattered myself that I should outwit and incense them all — behold, my hopes are to be crushed at once by my aunt's consent and approbation — and I am myself the only dupe at last! (*Walking about in a heat.*) But here, sir, here is the picture (*pauses R. C.*) — Beverley's picture (*taking a miniature from her bosom*) — which I have worn, night and day, in spite of threats and entreaties! There, sir (*flings it to him*), and be assured, I throw the original from my heart as easily. (*Down R.*)

CAPT. A. (*L. C.*). Nay, nay, ma'am, we will not differ as to that. Here (*taking out a picture*) — here is Miss Lydia Languish. What a difference! Ay, there is the heavenly assenting smile that first gave soul and spirit to my hopes — those are the lips which sealed a vow, as yet scarce dry in Cupid's calendar — and there the half-resentful blush, that would have checked the ardour of my thanks. Well, all that's past; all over, indeed! There, madam, in beauty that copy is not equal to you, but in my mind its merit over the original, in being still the same, is such — that — I'll put it in my pocket. (*Puts it up again.*)

LYD. (*softening, R. C.*). 'Tis your own doing, sir -- ! — I — I suppose you are perfectly satisfied.

CAPT. A. Oh, most certainly — sure, now, this is much better than being in love! Ha! ha! ha! — there's some

spirit in this! What signifies breaking some scores of solemn promises; all that's of no consequence, you know. To be sure, people will say, that Miss didn't know her own mind — but never mind that; or, perhaps, they may be ill-natured enough to hint that the gentleman grew tired of the lady and forsook her — but don't let that fret you.

LYD. (C.). There's no bearing his insolence!

(Bursts into tears, crosses from C. to R., and takes up her chair, sets it down hard, and flings herself into it with her back to CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE. He looks a moment at her back, takes chair at L., repeats her action, and sits with his back to her. After a pause, LYDIA looks round cautiously at the CAPTAIN; he turning at the same time detects her, and she flounces back, facing R. Then the CAPTAIN does the same thing, LYDIA detecting him, and so on ad libitum.)

Enter MRS. MALAPROP and SIR ANTHONY, R. I E.

MRS. M. (*entering*). Come, we must interrupt your billing and cooing awhile.

LYD. This is worse than your treachery and deceit, you base ingrate! *(Sobbing.)*

SIR A. (R. C.). What the devil's the matter now? Zounds! Mrs. Malaprop, this is the oddest billing and cooing I ever heard! But what the deuce is the meaning of it? I'm quite astonished!

CAPT. A. Ask the lady, sir.

MRS. M. (R.). Oh, mercy! I'm quite analyzed, for my part. Why, Lydia, what is the reason of this?

LYD. Ask the gentleman, ma'am.

SIR A. (*crossing to L. C.*). Zounds! I shall be in a frenzy! Why, Jack, you are not come out to be any one else, are you?

MRS. M. Ay, sir, there's no more trick, is there! You are not like Mr. Cerberus, three gentlemen at once, are you?

CAPT. A. You'll not let me speak — I say the lady can account for this much better than I can.

(Rises; crosses down L.)

LYD. (*rises; crosses down R.*). Ma'am, you once com-

manded me never to think of Beverley again — there is the man — I now obey you ; for from this moment, I renounce him for ever.

Exit R. I E.

MRS. M. Oh, mercy and miracles ! What a turn here is. I'm petrified. Why, sure, Captain, you haven't behaved inspectively to my niece ?

SIR A. (L. C.). Ha ! ha ! ha ! — ha ! ha ! ha ! Now I see it. Ha ! ha ! ha ! — now I see it. You have been too lively, Jack.

CAPT. A. (L.). Nay, sir, upon my word —

READY to change set.

SIR A. Come, no lying, Jack — I'm sure 'twas so. Come, no excuses, Jack ; why, your father, you rogue, was so before you ; the blood of the Absolutes was always impatient.

CAPT. A. By all that's good, sir —

SIR A. Zounds ! Say no more, I tell you — Mrs. Malaprop shall make your peace. You must make his peace, Mrs. Malaprop ; you must tell her 'tis Jack's way — tell her, 'tis all our ways — it runs in the blood of our family ! Come away, Jack, ha ! ha ! ha ! Mrs. Malaprop — a young villain !

Pushes him out. **Exeunt C. to L.**

MRS. M. Oh, Sir Anthony ! Oh, fie, Captain !

Exit R. I E.

CHANGE set.

Scene II. — *The North Parade, first grooves.*

Enter SIR LUCIUS O'TRIGGER, R. I E.

SIR L. (R. C.). I wonder where this Captain Absolute hides himself. Upon my conscience, these officers are always in one's way, in love affairs. I remember I might have married Lady Dorothy Carmine, if it had not been for a little rogue of a Major, who ran away with her before she could get a sight of me ! And I wonder, too, what it is the ladies can see in them to be so fond of them — unless it be a touch of the old serpent in them, that makes the

little creatures be caught, like vipers, with a bit of red cloth. Hah! Isn't this the Captain coming? 'Faith, it is! There is a probability of succeeding about that fellow that is mighty provoking! Who the devil is he talking to?

(Retires R.)

Enter CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE, L. I E.

CAPT. A. (L. C.). To what fine purpose have I been plotting! A noble reward for all my schemes, upon my soul! A little gipsy! I did not think her romance could have made her so damned absurd, either. 'Sdeath, I never was in a worse humour in my life! I could cut my own throat, or any other person's, with the greatest pleasure in the world!

SIR L. (*aside*). Oh, 'faith! I'm in the luck of it. I never could have found him in a sweeter temper for my purpose—to be sure, I'm just come in the nick! Now to enter into conversation with him, and so quarrel genteelly. (*Advances to* CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE.) With regard to that matter, Captain, I must beg leave to differ in opinion with you.

CAPT. A. (*crosses to* R. C.). Upon my word, then, you must be a very subtle disputant, because, sir, I happened just then to be giving no opinion at all.

SIR L. (L. C.). That's no reason; for give me leave to tell you, a man may think an untruth as well as speak one.

CAPT. A. Very true, sir; but if a man never utters his thoughts, I should think they might stand a chance of escaping controversy.

SIR L. Then, sir, you differ in opinion with me, which amounts to the same thing.

CAPT. A. Hark ye, Sir Lucius; if I had not before known you to be a gentleman, upon my soul, I should not have discovered it at this interview; for, what you can drive at, unless you mean to quarrel with me, I cannot conceive!

SIR L. I humbly thank you, sir, for the quickness of your apprehension. (*Bowing*.) You have named the very thing I would be at.

CAPT. A. Very well, sir—I shall certainly not balk your inclinations—but I should be glad if you would please to explain your motives.

WARN curtain.

SIR L. Pray, sir, be easy — the quarrel is a very pretty quarrel, as it stands — we should only spoil it by trying to explain it. However, your memory is very short, or you could not have forgot an affront you passed on me within this week. So, no more, but name your time and place.

CAPT. A. Well, sir, since you are so bent on it, the sooner the better; let it be this evening — here by the Spring Gardens. We shall scarcely be interrupted.

SIR L. 'Faith! that same interruption in affairs of this nature shows very great ill-breeding. I don't know what's the reason, but in England, if a thing of this kind gets wind, people make such a pother that a gentleman can never fight in peace and quietness. However, if it's the same to you, Captain, I should take it as a particular kindness if you'd let us meet in King's Mead Fields, as a little business will call me there about six o'clock, and I may despatch both matters at once.

CAPT. A. 'Tis the same to me exactly.

SIR L. If you please, sir, there will be very pretty small-sword light, though it won't do for a long shot.

CAPT. A. A little after six, then, we will discuss this matter more seriously.

Bows ceremoniously, and exit R. I E.

RING curtain.

SIR L. (*returning CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE'S salutation, and turning to L.*). So that matter's settled, and my mind's at ease.

Exit L. I E.

QUICK CURTAIN.

—————

ACT V.

Scene I. — JULIA'S *dressing-room, first grooves.*

Enter LYDIA, L. I E.

LYD. Heigho! Though he has used me so, this fellow runs strangely in my head. I believe one lecture from my grave cousin will make me recall him.

Enter JULIA, R. I E.

Oh, Julia, I am come to you with such an appetite for consolation! Lud, child! what's the matter with you? You have been crying! I'll be hanged if that Faulkland has not been tormenting you!

JUL. (R.). You mistake the cause of my uneasiness; something has flurried me a little, — nothing that you can guess at.

LYD. (L.). Ah! Whatever vexations you may have, I can assure you mine surpass them. You know who Beverley proves to be?

JUL. I will now own to you, Lydia, that Mr. Faulkland had before informed me of the whole affair.

LYD. So, then, I see I have been deceived by every one! But I don't care, I'll never have him.

JUL. Nay, Lydia —

LYD. Why, is it not provoking, when I thought we were coming to the prettiest distress imaginable, to find myself made a mere Smithfield bargain of at last? There had I projected one of the most sentimental elopements! So becoming a disguise — so amiable a ladder of ropes — conscious moon — four horses — Scotch parson — with such surprise to Mrs. Malaprop, and such paragraphs in the newspapers! Oh, I shall die with disappointment!

(Crosses to R.)

JUL. (*crosses to L.*). I don't wonder at it.

LYD. Now — sad reverse! What have I to expect, but after a deal of flimsy preparation, with a bishop's license and my aunt's blessing, to go simpering up to the altar, or, perhaps, be cried three times in a country church, and have an unmannerly fat clerk ask the consent of every butcher in the parish, to join John Absolute and Lydia Languish, spinster. Oh, that I should live to hear myself called spinster!

JUL. Melancholy, indeed!

LYD. How mortifying to remember the dear, delicious shifts I used to be put to to gain half a minute's conversation with this fellow! How often have I stole forth in the coldest night in January, and found him in the garden, stuck like a dripping statue! There would he kneel to me in the snow, and sneeze and cough so pathetically — he shivering with cold, and I with apprehension — and, while the freezing blast numbed our joints, how warmly would he press me to pity his flame and glow with mu-

tual ardour! Ah, Julia, that was something like being in love!

JUL. If I were in spirits, Lydia, I could chide you only by laughing heartily at you; but it suits more the situation of my mind, at present, earnestly to entreat you not to let a man who loves you with sincerity suffer that unhappiness from your caprice which I know too well caprice can inflict.

MRS. M. (*speaks without*, L. I E.). Where are they?

LYD. Oh, lud! What has brought my aunt here?

Enter, L. I E., MRS. MALAPROP *and* DAVID, *who is boo-hooing loudly.*

MRS. M. So! so! Here's fine work! Here's fine suicide, parricide, and simulation going on in the fields, and Sir Anthony not to be found to prevent the antistrophe!

JUL. (R.). For heaven's sake, madam, what's the matter?

MRS. M. (L. C.). That gentleman can tell you; 'twas he enveloped the whole affair to me.

LYD. (R. C.). Oh, patience! Do, ma'am, for heaven's sake, tell us what is the matter!

MRS. M. Why, murder's the matter! Slaughter's the matter! Killing's the matter! But he can tell you the perpendiculars. (*Pointing to DAVID.*)

JUL. (*to* L. C.). Do speak, my friend. (*To DAVID.*)

DAV. (L.). Look ye, my lady — by the mass, there's mischief going on. Folks don't use to meet for amusement with fire arms, firelocks, fire engines, fire screens, fire office, and the devil knows what other crackers beside! This, my lady, I say has an angry favour.

READY to change set.

JUL. But who's engaged?

DAV. (*falling on his knees*). My poor master — under favour for mentioning him first. You know me, my lady — I am David — and my master, of course, is, or was, Squire Acres — and Captain Absolute. Then comes Squire Faulkland.

JUL. Do, ma'am, let us instantly endeavour to prevent mischief.

MRS. M. (C.). Oh, fie! It would be very inelegant in us — we should only participate things.

LYD. Do, my dear aunt, let us hasten to prevent them.

DAV. Ah, do, Mrs. Aunt, save a few lives! They are desperately given, believe me. Above all, there is that blood-thirsty Philistine, Sir Lucius O'Trigger.

MRS. M. (*aside*). Sir Lucius O'Trigger! Oh, mercy! Have they drawn poor little dear Sir Lucius into the scrape! (*Aloud*.) Why, how you stand, girl! You have no more feeling than one of the Derbyshire putrefactions!

LYD. What are we to do, madam?

MRS. M. Why, fly with the utmost felicity, to be sure, to prevent mischief!

LYD. Oh, fie, dear aunt; it would be very inelegant in us. We should only participate things.

MRS. M. Come, girls, this gentleman will exhort us. Come, sir, you're our envoy; lead the way, and we'll precede. You're sure you know the spot?

DAV. (*rising*). Oh, never fear! And one good thing is, we shall find it out by the report of the pistols.

ALL THE LADIES. The pistols! Oh, let us fly!

Exeunt, L. I E., MRS. MALAPROP *first*, DAVID *last*.

CHANGE set.

Scene II. — *King's Mead Fields, full stage.*

Enter SIR LUCIUS, R. U. E., *followed by* ACRES, *who is very pale, and holds a big pistol in each hand by the extreme tips of his thumbs and fingers.*

ACRES (*coming down stage, R.*). By my valour, then, Sir Lucius, forty yards is a good distance. Odds levels and aims! I say it is a good distance.

SIR L. (*down stage, L.*). It is for muskets, or small field pieces. Upon my conscience (*crossing R. to take one pistol from ACRES*), Mr. Acres, you must leave these things to me. Stay now, I'll show you. (*Measures paces across front of stage from R. to L.*) There, now, that is a very pretty distance — a pretty gentleman's distance. (*Stops at L.*)

ACRES. Zounds! We might as well fight in a sentry-box! I tell you, Sir Lucius, the farther he is off the cooler I shall take my aim.

SIR L. Faith, then, I suppose you would aim at him best of all if he was out of sight!

ACRES. No, Sir Lucius, but I should think forty, or eight and thirty yards —

SIR L. (*crosses R.*). Pho! pho! nonsense! Three or four feet between the mouths of your pistols is as good as a mile.

ACRES (C.). Odds bullets, no! By my valour, there is no merit in killing him so near! Do, my dear Sir Lucius, let me bring him down at a long shot; a long shot, Sir Lucius, if you love me.

SIR L. (R. C.). Well, the gentleman's friend and I must settle that. (*Going near ACRES and taking his arm; confidentially.*) But tell me, now, Mr. Acres, in case of an accident, is there any little will or commission I could execute for you?

(*Folding his arms, and bringing the muzzle of pistol against ACRES'S breast.*)

ACRES (*shuddering*). I am much obliged to you, Sir Lucius, but I don't understand. (*Pushes pistol away.*)

SIR L. Why, you may think there's no being shot at without a little risk — and, if an unlucky bullet should carry a quietus with it, I say, it will be no time then to be bothering you about family matters.

ACRES. A quietus!

SIR L. For instance, now, if that should be the case — would you choose to be pickled and sent home?

ACRES. I'd rather be preserved.

SIR L. Or would it be the same to you to lie here in the Abbey? I'm told there is very snug lying in the Abbey.

ACRES. Pickled! Snug lying in the Abbey! Odds tremours! Sir Lucius, don't talk so!

SIR L. I suppose, Mr. Acres, you never were engaged in an affair of this kind before.

(*Folds his arms, and repeats business with pistol.*)

ACRES. No, Sir Lucius, never before, and I'll take damned good care that I never am again.

SIR L. Ah, that's a pity — there's nothing like being used to a thing. Pray, now, how would you receive the gentleman's shot?

ACRES. Odds files! I've practised that. There, Sir Lucius, there (*releasing himself from SIR L., and putting himself into an attitude*) — a side-front, hey? Odd, I'll make myself small enough — I'll stand edgeways.

SIR L. Now, you're quite out — for if you stand so when I take my aim — (*Levelling at him.*)

ACRES. (*in alarm*). Zounds, Sir Lucius! Are you sure it is not cocked?

SIR L. Never fear.

(*Yielding to ACRES'S alarm, he puts the pistol in his left hand, and takes aim with his empty right hand.*)

ACRES. But — but — you don't know — it may go off of its own head!

SIR L. Pho! be easy. Well, now, if I hit you in the body, my bullet has a double chance; for if it misses a vital part on your right side, 'twill be very hard if it don't succeed on the left.

ACRES. A vital part!

SIR L. But there — fix yourself so. (*Puts ACRES square before him, and walks over to the extreme L. As he does so, ACRES unconsciously follows him, step by step. SIR LUCIUS, turning back, misses him.*) Hallo! Mr. Acres, where are you?

ACRES (*timidly*). Here I am.

SIR L. (*Leading ACRES back to position, places him squarely again, straightening his chin.*) Let him see the broadside of your full front. (*Paces the distance again, and turns to bring his pistol to position. As he does so, ACRES turns his back, and ducks to avoid the pistol.*) Do you call that the broadside of your full front? That's the broadside of your full back. Mr. Acres, were you ever in Ireland?

ACRES. Never.

SIR L. I thought not, for then you would have learnt never to turn your back on a friend in distress or a foe in a fight. (*ACRES straightens himself.*) There — now a ball or two may pass clean through your body, and never do you any harm at all.

(*Returns to c., and touches ACRES again on the breast with pistol.*)

ACRES (*snatching pistol*). Clean through me! A ball or two clean through me!

SIR L. Ay, may they — and it is much the genteelest attitude into the bargain.

ACRES. Look ye, Sir Lucius — I'd just as lieve be shot in an awkward posture as a genteel one — so, by my valour, I will stand edgeways.

SIR L. (*looking at his watch*). Sure, I hope they won't disappoint us —

ACRES (*aside*). I hope they do.

SIR L. (*up stage, looking off R. U. E.*). Hah! no, faith — I think I see them coming.

ACRES. Hey! What — coming! (*Up stage.*)

SIR L. Ay, who are those yonder, getting over the stile?

ACRES. There are two of them indeed! Well, let them come — hey, Sir Lucius! We — we — we — we — won't run. (*Links his arm in that of SIR LUCIUS.*)

SIR L. Run! (*They come down stage together.*)

ACRES. No, I say — we won't run, by my valour!

SIR L. What the devil's the matter with you?

ACRES. Nothing, nothing, my dear friend — my dear Sir Lucius — but I — I — I don't feel quite so bold, somehow. as I did.

SIR L. Oh, fie! Consider your honour.

ACRES. Ay, true — my honour — do, Sir Lucius, edge in a word or two, every now and then, about my honour.

SIR L. Well, here they're coming. (*Looking at R. U. E.*)

ACRES. Sir Lucius, if I wasn't with you, I should almost think I was afraid — if my valour should leave me. Valour will come and go.

SIR L. (L. C.). Then, pray, keep it fast while you have it.

ACRES (L.). Sir Lucius, — I doubt it is going — yes, my valour is certainly going! It is sneaking off! I feel it oozing out, as it were, at the palms of my hands!

(*Leans faintly against SIR LUCIUS.*)

SIR L. Your honour — your honour! They're coming.

ACRES. I'm going.

SIR L. They're here.

ACRES. I'm gone. (SIR LUCIUS *holds him.*) Oh, that I was safe at Clod Hall, or could be shot before I was aware!

Enter FAULKLAND *and* CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE, R. U. E.

SIR L. (L. C.). Gentlemen, your most obedient — So, I suppose, sir, you are come here just like myself — to do a kind office first for your friend, then to proceed to business on your own account, Captain Absolute?

ACRES (*crossing from L. to C. to CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE, and shaking his hand warmly, glad to see a friend*). What, Jack! My dear Jack! My dear friend!

CAPT. A. (R. C.). Harkye, Bob, Beverley's at hand.

(*ACRES drops his hand, and goes down to L. corner.*)

SIR L. (L. C.). Well, Mr. Acres, I don't blame your saluting the gentleman civilly. So, Mr. Beverley (*to FAULKLAND*), if you choose your weapons, the captain and I will measure the ground.

FAUL. (R.). My weapons, sir!

ACRES. Odds life! Sir Lucius, I'm not going to fight Mr. Faulkland; these are my particular friends! (*Crosses to c.*)

SIR L. What, sir, did not you come here to fight Mr. Acres?

FAUL. Not I, upon my word, sir!

SIR L. Well, now, that's mighty provoking! But I hope, Mr. Faulkland, as there are three of us come on purpose for the game, you won't be so cantankerous as to spoil the party, by sitting out.

CAPT. A. Oh, pray, Faulkland, fight to oblige Sir Lucius.

FAUL. Nay, if Mr. Acres is so bent on the matter —

(*Half draws.*)

ACRES (*crosses hastily to FAULKLAND, puts his right hand on his shoulder and his left on FAULKLAND'S right, and presses the sword back into its scabbard*). No, no, Mr. Faulkland — I'll bear my disappointment like a Christian. (*At c.*) Lookye, Sir Lucius, there's no occasion at all for me to fight; and if it is the same to you, I'd as lieve let it alone.

SIR L. Observe me, Mr. Acres — I must not be trifled with! You have certainly challenged somebody, and you came here to fight him. Now, if that gentleman is willing to represent him, I can't see, for my soul, why it isn't just the same thing.

ACRES. Why, no, Sir Lucius; I tell you, 'tis one Beverley I've challenged — a fellow, you see, that dare not show his face. If he were here, I'd make him give up his pretensions directly.

CAPT. A. Hold, Bob — let me set you right — there is no such man as Beverley in the case.

ACRES (*sotto voce*). I'm damned glad of it.

CAPT. A. The person who assumed that name is before you; and as his pretensions are the same in both characters, he is ready to support them in whatever way you please.

SIR L. Well, this is lucky. Now you have an opportunity.

(*Slaps ACRES violently on the back, causing his hat to fall on his nose.*)

ACRES. What, quarrel with my dear friend, Jack Absolute! Not if he were fifty Beverleys! Zounds! Sir Lucius, you would not have me so unnatural! Don't be frightened, Jack; I won't hurt you.

SIR L. Upon my conscience, Mr. Acres, your valour has oozed away with a vengeance!

ACRES. Not in the least! Odds backs and abettors! I'll be your second with all my heart. And if you should get a quietus, you may command me entirely. I'll get you snug lying in the Abbey here, or pickle you and send you over to Blunderbuss Hall, or anything of the kind, with the greatest pleasure.

SIR L. Pho! pho! You are little better than a coward.

ACRES. Mind, gentlemen, he calls me a coward; coward was the word, by my valour! (ACRES looks round to see if any one has noticed the insult, crosses between CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE and FAULKLAND, half hoping they had not heard.) You heard him call me "coward"?

(They nod affirmatively. He sighs, pulls himself together, takes an arm of each, and struts with them over to SIR LUCIUS.)

SIR L. Well, sir?

ACRES (*pulls CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE and FAULKLAND close together, and stands between them*). Lookye, Sir Lucius. 't isn't that I mind the word coward. Coward may be said in a joke. But if you had called me a poltroon, odds daggers and balls!

SIR L. Well, sir?

ACRES. I should have thought you a very ill-bred man.

SIR L. Pho! You are beneath my notice.

(Turns away to L.)

ACRES. The more my good luck.

(Recoils a step, and goes up c.)

CAPT. A. Nay, Sir Lucius, you can't have a better second than my friend Acres. He is a most determined dog — called in the country, fighting Bob. He generally kills a man a week — don't you, Bob?

ACRES (*shaking his head, and winking at CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE*). Yes, in the country, but never on a party of pleasure.

SIR L. (L.). Well, then, Captain, 'tis we must begin — to come out, my little counsellor (*draws his sword*), and ask the gentleman, whether he will resign the lady without forcing you to proceed against him.

CAPT. A. (R. C.). Come on then, sir (*draws*), since you won't let it be an amicable suit, here's my reply.

(They cross swords.)

Enter SIR ANTHONY, DAVID *carrying stable-broom, and the LADIES*, L. U. E.

DAV. Knock 'em all down, sweet Sir Anthony. Knock down my master in particular — and bind his hands over to their good behaviour!

(Rushes between them with his broom. SIR ANTHONY and MRS. MALAPROP come down; LYDIA and JULIA remain in background.)

ACRES *(blustering)*. You poltroon, you cowardly hound, how dare you interfere!

(Drives DAVID off, R. U. E., and returns without the pistols.)

SIR A. (L. C.). Put up, Jack, put up, or I shall be in a frenzy. How came you in a duel, sir?

CAPT. A. (R.). 'Faith, sir, that gentleman can tell you better than I; 'twas he called on me, and you know, sir, I serve his majesty.

SIR A. Here's a pretty fellow! I catch him going to cut a man's throat, and he tells me he serves his majesty! Zounds! sirrah, then how durst you draw the king's sword against one of his subjects?

CAPT. A. Sir, I tell you, that gentleman called me out without explaining his reasons.

SIR A. 'Gad, sir! how came you to call my son out without explaining your reasons?

SIR L. (L.). Your son, sir, insulted me in a manner which my honour could not brook.

SIR A. Zounds, Jack! how durst you insult the gentleman in a manner which his honour could not brook?

MRS. M. (R. C.). Come, come, let's have no honour before ladies. Captain Absolute, come here. How could you intimidate us so? Here's Lydia has been terrified to death for you.

CAPT. A. For fear I should be killed or escape, ma'am?

MRS. M. Nay, no delusions to the past — Lydia is convinced; speak, child.

SIR L. With your leave, ma'am, I must put in a word here. I believe I could interpret the young lady's silence. Now mark — *(Crosses to L. C.)*

LYD. (C.). What is it you mean, sir?

SIR L. (L. C.). Come, come, Dalia, we must be serious now; this is no time for trifling.

LYD. (*crosses to R.*). 'Tis true, sir; and your reproof bids me offer this gentleman my hand, and solicit the return of his affections.

CAPT. A. Oh, my little angel, say you so? (*Embraces her, and leads her to C.*) Sir Lucius, I perceive there must be some mistake here. With regard to the affront which you affirm I have given you, I can only say that it could not have been intentional. And as you must be convinced that I should not fear to support a real injury, you shall now see that I am not ashamed to atone for an inadvertency. I ask your pardon. But for this lady, while honoured with her approbation, I will support my claim against any man whatever.

SIR A. (L.). Well said, Jack, and I'll stand by you, my boy.

ACRES. (*to R. of CAPTAIN*). Mind, I give up all my claim — I make no pretensions to anything in the world; and if I can't get a wife without fighting for her, by my valour! I'll live a bachelor, and pay the tax.

SIR L. Captain, give me your hand — an affront, handsomely acknowledged, becomes an obligation; and as for the lady, if she chooses to deny her own hand-writing here —
(*Takes out letters.*)

MRS. M. (R. C.). Oh, he will dissolve my mystery! Sir Lucius, perhaps there is some mistake. Perhaps I can illuminate —

SIR L. Pray, old gentlewoman, don't interfere where you have no business. Miss Languish, are you my Dalia, or not?

LYD. Indeed, Sir Lucius, I am not!

(*LYDIA and ABSOLUTE walk aside up C.*)

MRS. M. Sir Lucius O'Trigger — ungrateful as you are, I own the soft impeachment. Pardon my camelion blushes, I am Delia.

SIR L. (C.). You Dalia! Pho! pho! be easy!

MRS. M. Why, thou barbarous Vandyke — those letters are mine. When you are more sensible of my benignity, perhaps I may be brought to encourage your addresses.

SIR L. Mrs. Molly-prop, I am extremely sensible of your condescension; and whether you or Lucy have put this trick upon me, I am equally beholden to you. And to show you I am not ungrateful, Captain Absolute, since you have taken that lady from me, I'll give you my Dalia into the bargain.

CAPT. A. I am much obliged to you, Sir Lucius; but here's my friend, fighting Bob, unprovided for.

SIR L. Hah! little valour — here, will you make your fortune?
(Crosses to ACRES at R.)

ACRES. Odds wrinkles! No. But give me your hand, Sir Lucius, forget and forgive. If ever I give you a chance of pickling me again, say Bob Acres is a dunce, that's all.

(ACRES and SIR LUCIUS go up stage, cross at back, and come down L.)

SIR A. (coming down R. of MRS. MALAPROP). Come, Mrs. Malaprop, don't be cast down — you are in your bloom yet.

MRS. M. Oh, Sir Anthony! men are all barbarians!

(All retire up stage but JULIA and FAULKLAND.)

JUL. (down L.). He seems dejected and unhappy — not sullen. There was some foundation, however, for the tale he told me. Oh, woman! how true should be your judgment, when your resolution is so weak!

FAUL. (down R.). Julia! — how can I sue for what I so little deserve? I dare not presume — yet hope is the child of penitence.

JUL. Oh! Faulkland, you have not been more faulty in your unkind treatment of me, than I am now in wanting inclination to resent it. As my heart honestly bids me place my weakness to the account of love, I should be ungenerous not to admit the same plea for yours.

WARN curtain.

(SIR ANTHONY comes forward c. between them.)

FAUL. Now I shall be blest, indeed.

SIR A. What's going on here? So, you have been quarrelling too, I warrant. Come, Julia, I never interfered before; but let me have a hand in the matter at last. All the faults I have ever seen in my friend Faulkland seemed to proceed from what he calls the delicacy and warmth of his affection for you. There, marry him directly, Julia, you'll find he'll mend surprisingly.

(Putting FAULKLAND across to JULIA. The rest of the characters come forward.)

SIR L. (L.). Come, now, I hope there is no dissatisfied person but what is content; for as I have been disappointed myself, it will be very hard if I have not the satisfaction of seeing other people succeed better —

ACRES (R.). You are right, Sir Lucius. So, Jack, I wish you joy — Mr. Faulkland, the same. Ladies, — come, now, to show you I'm neither vexed nor angry, odds tabors and pipes! I'll order the fiddles in half an hour to the New Rooms, and I insist on your all meeting me there.

SIR A. 'Gad, sir, I like your spirit! And at night we single lads will drink a health to the young couples, and a good husband to Mrs. Malaprop.

ACRES.	LYDIA.	FAUL.	MRS. M.
⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
CAPT. A.	SIR A.	JULIA.	SIR L.

RING curtain.

QUICK CURTAIN.

NOTE. — Mr. Joseph Jefferson, in the much abbreviated version which he employed for many seasons, made use of the following "tag" in rhyme, spoken with the characters in the above positions ready for the curtain. It is printed here by his kind permission, as an interesting variation of the usual ending.

SIR L.	A foolish gentleman, if he be wise, Will ever for his faults apologise. And, if we've failed to charm this cultured garden, It only now remains to ask your pardon.
CAPT. A.	And as we've rivals been in Cupid's cause —
LYD.	We will be rivals only now for your applause.
SIR A.	To unrelenting fathers I appeal, And urge forbearance in parental zeal. To check your son, a gentle word is ample, And so, by mildness, follow my example.
MRS. M.	If I've succeeded with my incantations, I humbly claim your kindly conflagrations.
SIR L.	Kindly conflagrations! Did you ever hear the like?
MRS. M.	Sir Lucius, you're a barbarous Vandyke.
ACRES.	For my vain errors let me say a word, And quote a maxim you have often heard, That he who fights and runs away Will live to fight another day. Odds Valor! then—our courage we'll renew, And fight again if seconded by you.

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